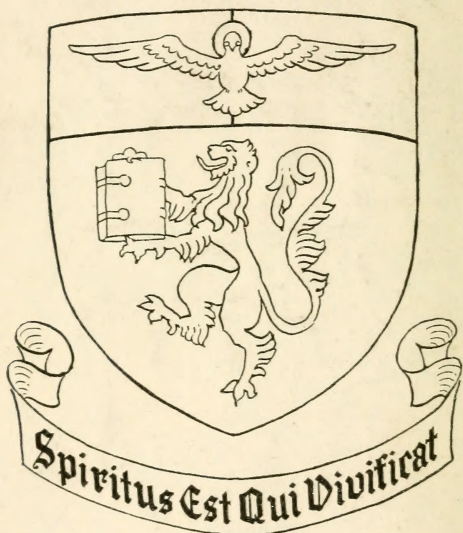
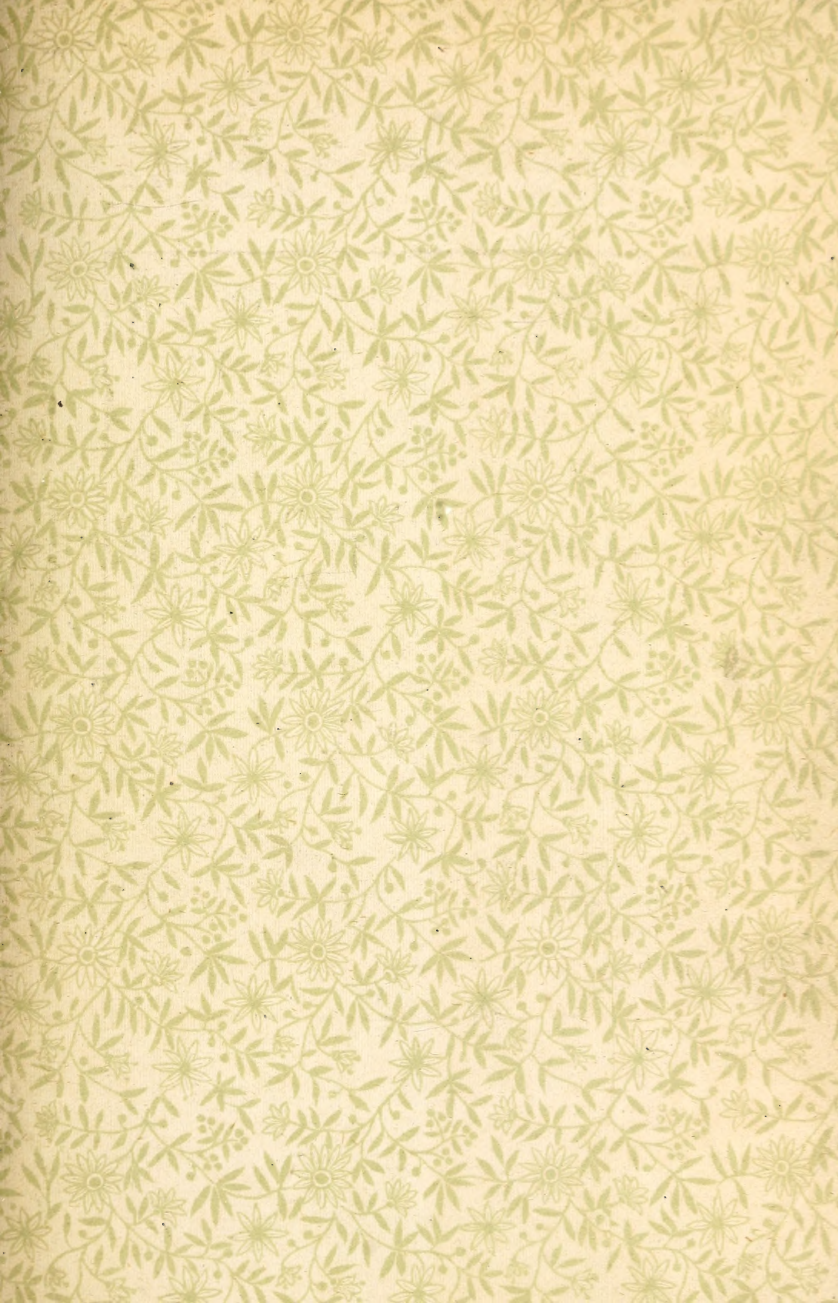



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THE
CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART III:
THE PUBLIC LIFE OF THE PRIEST.

PART IV:
THE MIXED LIFE OF THE PRIEST.

BY
REV. MICHAEL MÜLLER, C.S.S.R.

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CONTENTS.

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART III.

The Public Life of the Priest.

	PAGE.
CHAPTER I. Zeal for the Salvation of Souls—The Motives of Zeal...	1
CHAPTER II. The Priest in the Pulpit—Obligation of Preaching—What we Must Preach.....	28
CHAPTER III. To Comply with the Obligation of Preaching the Priest Must be Well Prepared. He Must Clothe the Word of God in Correct Language and Deliver it in an Attractive, Plain Style	39
CHAPTER IV. Continuation of the Same Subject—The Priest Must Not Seek Himself in Preaching the Word of God. He Must Study Holy Scripture Diligently and Have the Spirit of Prayer.	51
CHAPTER V. St. Francis de Sales' Opinions About Preaching and Controversy, and His Method of Dealing With Heretics	68
CHAPTER VI. The Priest in the School-room.....	88
CHAPTER VII. The Necessity of Having Schools.....	105
CHAPTER VIII. The Priest in the Confessional.—The Priest must be a Learned and Kind Father.	122
CHAPTER IX. The Priest must be a Pious and Prudent Physician	139
CHAPTER X. The Priest must be a Just and Impartial Judge	170
CHAPTER XI. The Spirit of St. Alphonsus—His Moral Theology	174
CHAPTER XII. The Zeal of the Pastor for the Spiritual Advancement of his Flock. (Spiritual Direction.)	194

CHAPTER XIII.	An Important Decree of the S. Congregatio Episcoporum et Regularium. (From the Italian.).....	211
CHAPTER XIV.	Mortification.....	238
CHAPTER XV.	The Priest at the Sick-bed.....	258
CHAPTER XVI.	Practical Method of Attending the Dying. (By St. Alphonsus Liguori).	279
CHAPTER XVII.	The Great Means to Reform a Parish—Missions.	304
CHAPTER XVIII.	The Means to Preserve Religious Fervor in a Congregation—The First Means—The Fre- quentation of the Sacraments.....	315
CHAPTER XIX.	The Second Means— <i>Circulation of Good Books</i> .	324
CHAPTER XX.	The Third Means—The Establishment of Pious Associations, etc.....	334
CHAPTER XXI.	Divine Worship.....	346
CHAPTER XXII.	Sacred Music.....	353
CHAPTER XXIII.	Regulations for Sacred Music.....	363
CHAPTER XXIV.	The Use and Observance of the Ceremonies of the Church.....	372
CHAPTER XXV.	What we Should do in Transacting Affairs of Importance.....	387
CHAPTER XXVI.	In what Spirit we Should Transact Temporal Affairs.....	400
CHAPTER XXVII.	The Spirit of Charity.—Faults Contrary to it..	414
CHAPTER XXVIII.	Continuation of the Same Subject.....	442
CHAPTER XXIX.	Recreation.....	461
CHAPTER XXX.	False, Indiscreet Zeal.....	469
CHAPTER XXXI.	Examples of Prudent and Imprudent Zeal...	488
CHAPTER XXXII.	The Priest as Rector of the Parish—Difficulty of Directing Others.....	502
CHAPTER XXXIII.	A Discussion on the Manner of Governing...	511
CHAPTER XXXIV.	The Marks of a Rigorous Government.....	545
CHAPTER XXXV.	The Marks of a Mild Government.....	551
CHAPTER XXXVI.	Practical Conclusions.....	558
CHAPTER XXXVII.	Correction.....	572
CHAPTER XXXVIII.	Examples in Illustration of What has Been Said in the Preceding Chapter,....	582
CHAPTER XXXIX.	St. Francis de Sales—a Model Pastor and Superior.....	592

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART IV.

The Mixed Life of the Priest.

	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.	The Mixed Life—Its Meaning and Practice.... 1
CHAPTER II.	Two Great Means to Remain United with God —The First Means..... 15
CHAPTER III.	The Second Means to Remain United with God.... 29
CHAPTER IV.	The First Forerunner of an Unhappy Death— Lukewarmness..... 38
CHAPTER V.	The Second Forerunner of an Unhappy Death —Mortal Sins..... 57
CHAPTER VI.	Sacrilegious Celebration of Mass..... 73
CHAPTER VII.	The Spirit of Avarice—Its Evil Effects. 80
CHAPTER VIII.	The Passions—the Source of our Sins..... 94
CHAPTER IX.	The Lukewarm Priest on his Death-bed..... 113
CHAPTER X.	The Particular Judgment of the Lukewarm Priest.... 120
CHAPTER XI.	The General Judgment..... 125
CHAPTER XII.	Hell..... 166
CHAPTER XIII.	The Repentant Priest..... 184
CHAPTER XIV.	The Three Graces which we Must Ask of God Every Day of our Life..... 207
CHAPTER XV.	Death of the Good Priest..... 233
CHAPTER XVI.	The Good Priest on the Day of General Judg- ment..... 243
CHAPTER XVII.	The Instructions and Admonitions Written, at the Command of Our Lord, by St. John the Evangelist, to the Bishops of the Seven Churches in Asia..... 250

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART III.

The Public Life of the Priest.

CHAPTER I.

ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.—THE MOTIVES OF ZEAL.

It is an article of our holy faith that the Son of God descended from heaven, became man and died on the infamous gibbet of the cross for no other purpose than to save mankind from hell. The whole life of our Lord was devoted to this purpose. For this purpose alone he established his Church and instituted the priesthood.

The kings and monarchs of this world are bound to take care of the temporal welfare of their subjects; but it is the special duty of the priest to work for the salvation and sanctification of his fellow-men. This should be the principal object of all his thoughts, schemes, labors, sufferings, and prayers. The vocation of the priest obliges him to labor with all possible diligence for this great object. He should, therefore, be enkindled with true zeal for the salvation of souls.

Now, what do we mean by zeal for the salvation of souls? It is a desire to see God truly loved, and honored, and served by all men. Those who are inflamed with this beautiful fire endeavor to communicate it to the whole world. If they perceive that God is offended, without being able to put a stop to such offences, they weep and lament; they feel interiorly devoured and consumed by the fervor of their zeal. "Who should be looked upon as a man consumed with the zeal for the house of God?" asked St. Augustine. "He who ardently desires to prevent offences against God, and endeavors to repair such offences as he could not foresee, and who, when he cannot induce those who have sinned to weep, weeps and groans himself when he sees God dishonored." With such a zeal the saints of the Old Law were inflamed. "I found my heart and my bones," says Jeremiah (xx, 9, 10), "secretly inflamed, as with a fire that even devoured me; and I fainted away, not being able to resist it; because I heard the blasphemies of many people." "I was inflamed with zeal for the God of armies," says Elias, "because the children of Israel have broken their covenant." (III. Kings xix, 10.) "A fainting has taken hold of me," says the royal Prophet, "because sinners have forsaken Thy law; and my zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forgot Thy commandments." (Psalms cxviii, 53.) These holy men were thus afflicted at seeing with what licentiousness the wicked violated the law of God; the sorrow of their minds seemed to pass into the humors of their body, and even into their very blood. "I beheld the wicked," says David, "I pined away; because they kept not Thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii, 158.)

“ Mine eyes became fountains of water ; because they observed not Thy law.” (*Ibid.* cxxxvi.) It was the violence of his zeal that made David melt into tears when he beheld the infinite Majesty of God offended. This zeal made St. Paul write to the Romans : “ I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sadness and continual sorrow in my heart ; for I wished myself to be anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh.” (Rom. ix, 1-3.)

O how much have the saints done for the salvation of their neighbors ? Let us hear what the great Apostle of the Gentiles says of his own labors, troubles and sufferings for the salvation of men. In his epistle to the Corinthians he writes : “ Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst ; and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode ; and we labor with our own hands : we are reviled and we bless ; we are persecuted and we suffer it ; we are blasphemed and we entreat : we are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all even until now.” (I. Cor. iv, 11, 13.) “ Our flesh had no rest, but we suffered all tribulation : combats without, fears within.” (II. Cor. vii, 5.) “ In many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in death often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods ; once I was stoned ; thrice I suffered shipwreck ; a night and a day was I in the depth of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labor and painful-

ness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (II. Cor. xi, 23-27.)

All truly apostolic men can use similar language. Were St. Francis Xavier to appear among us, he could tell us that in order to lead the barbarians to God, he climbed mountains and exposed himself to innumerable dangers to find those wretched beings in the caverns, where they dwelt.

St. Francis de Sales would tell us that, to convert the heretics of the province of Chablais, he risked his life by crossing a river every day for a year, on his hands and knees, upon a frozen beam, that he might preach the truth to those stubborn heretics.

St. Fidelis would tell us that, to bring back to God the heretics of a certain place, he willingly consented to lose his life.

"Ah," exclaimed St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, "how great a pain it is, O Lord, to see how one could help Thy creatures by dying for them and not be able to do so." In her zeal for the salvation of souls, she went so far as to desire to endure even the pains of hell for their conversion, provided she could still love God in that place of woe; and God granted her wish by inflicting on her the most violent pains and infirmities for the salvation of sinners. Yet after all this, she shed bitter tears, thinking that she did nothing for the conversion of these unhappy beings. "Ah, Lord!" she used to exclaim, "let me die, and return to life again as many times as is necessary to atone for the sins of men."

The Curé of Ars says in one of his catechetical instructions: "A great lady of one of the first families in France has been here, and she went away this morning.

She is rich, very rich, and scarcely twenty-three. She has offered herself to God for the conversion of sinners and the expiation of sin. She mortifies herself in a thousand ways, wears a girdle all armed with iron points; her parents know nothing of it; she is as white as a sheet of paper."

"And there came in my heart, as a burning fire, shut up in my bones, and I was wearied, not being able to bear it," says Jeremiah xx, 9.

St. Chrysostom says: "A single priest, inflamed with zeal for God's honor, is sufficient to convert a whole nation." (Homil. i, ad propul.) Witness the Prophets Elias, Eliseus, Isaias, St. John the Baptist and other Prophets.

Witness St. Bernard, who was like a burning fire. Such were the effects of his preaching that mothers prevented their children, wives their husbands, and friends their friends from going to listen to him, because the Holy Ghost gave such force to his words as to destroy all irregular desires and affections in the hearts of his hearers.

Witness St. Dominic, who, like an angel from heaven, urged all, by his words, life and example, to seek the kingdom of God. Enkindled with the fire of divine love, he tried to enkindle the same fire in the hearts of all men. Upon being asked from what book he took such fiery sermons: "From the book of charity," he replied. "This is the only book I study, and from it I take, not inflating, but inflaming words."

Witness St. Francis of Assisi, of whom St. Bonaventure relates, that men of every age and of both sexes ran to see and hear this man of God. His words were like a burning fire, which penetrated the heart, and filled with

admiration the minds of all his hearers. His heart, his soul, his looks, his words, his actions, were all fire. Hence he converted so many thousands from a sinful to a Christian life, and from an ordinary life to a life of great perfection.

The first motive of zeal—its obligation.

It cannot be doubted that heroic virtue, angelic patience and superhuman courage are necessary for priests to comply with their duties towards God and their fellow-men. Jesus Christ knew full well all the difficulties which his poor priests had to encounter. But he encourages them, and says to them : “He that receiveth you, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet” (a priest), “shall receive the reward of a prophet” (of a priest). Jesus Christ made the salvation of the people dependent on the priest ; and he made, also, the priest dependent on the people for his support, and other expenses which he has to incur in the exercise of the sacred ministry. It is by this mutual dependence that our divine Saviour keeps the priests united with the people. The devil—the cursed spirit of discord—has often tried to break up this sacred union between Catholic nations and their clergy. He has succeeded in many countries by means of Protestant governments, but he never could succeed in one country—in the country of the glorious St. Patrick, in Ireland. There the government of England offered, some years ago, to support the Catholic clergy. Had this offer been accepted, the Catholic priests of Ireland would have become dependent on the English government ; and that close union and warm love, that deep-rooted respect and esteem which, for so many cen-

turies, have existed between the Irish Catholics and their priests, would soon have fallen a prey to the devilish trick of the government. But, thanks be to God, and to the foresight and wisdom of the Irish clergy, the devil and his colleague—the English government—met, in this instance, as in many others, with a cold reception—with a flat refusal.

The faithful are obliged by the laws of God and of the Church to support the priest. But why? Solely that the priest may supply their spiritual wants. *Do, ut des.* According to Moral Theology parish-priests and all who have the care of souls are bound “*ex justitia*,” “*sub gravi*,” to attend to the spiritual wants of their flock.

The fourth commandment is binding on parish priests just as much as it is on parents. How would you treat, in the confessional, those parents who allow their children to grow up without any knowledge of their holy faith, without having ever made their first Communion? And what are we to think of those parish-priests who allow so many of their children to grow up ignorant of their faith and without having made their first Communion? “*Si quis autem suorum et maxime domesticorum curam non-habet*,” says the Apostle, “*fidem negavit et est in fidei deterior.*” (I. Tim. v, 8.)

Moreover, those who are not bound “*ex justitia*,” are bound at least “*ex charitate.*” St. Alphonsus says that the priest is not consecrated merely to say Mass or recite the breviary. He must labor for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Each priest must try to save as many souls as possible. “*Pastor ovium-qualis est quivis sacerdos, dum cuivis sacerdoti committitur incumbere salutis animarum.*” (Theol. Moral. de Sacr. n. 802.)

“It is useless to say : ‘ I am a “ *sacerdos simplex* ;’ I have not the care of souls ; it is enough for me to take care of myself.’ No ; every priest is bound to attend in the way he can to the salvation of souls according to their spiritual wants. In our Moral Theology (L. 6, n. 624, reg. 11.) we have proved that a ‘ *sacerdos simplex*’ is bound to hear confessions, if the souls of his place are in grievous spiritual necessity for want of confessors. If he has not the necessary learning for hearing confessions, he is obliged to acquire it. This is the opinion which the learned Father Pavone of the Society of Jesus, mentioned in his works, and not without reason ; for as God has sent Jesus Christ to save the world, so Jesus Christ has appointed priests to convert sinners : “ *Sicut misit me pater, et ego mitto vos.*” (Joan., xx, 21.) Hence the Council of Trent ordains that they who wish to receive Holy Orders, should prove themselves fit for the administration of the sacraments : “ *Ad ministranda sacramenta idonei comprobentur.*” (Sess. 24, c. 14.) For this end, says the angelic doctor, God instituted the order of priests, that they might sanctify others by the administration of the sacraments : “ *Deus posuit ordinem in ea, ut quidam aliis sacramenta traderent.*” (Supp. 934, a. 1.) And priests are especially appointed to administer the sacrament of penance. For immediately after the words “ *sicut misit me pater,*” &c., St. John adds : “ *hæc cum dixisset, insufflavit et dixit eis ; accipite Spiritum Sanctum ; quorum remiseritis peccata remittuntur eis.*” Since then it is the office of a priest to absolve from sins, one of his principal obligations is to qualify himself for that office, at least when there is necessity, that he may not receive the reproach contained

in the words of St. Paul to his companions in the priesthood, “Adjurantes autem exhortamur, ne in vacuum gratiam Dei recipiatis.” (2 Cor., vi, 1.)

I do not see how a priest can be excused from sin, who beholds the people of the place in grievous necessity, and is able to assist them by teaching the truths of faith, or by preaching the divine word, and even by hearing confessions, and through sloth neglects to give them spiritual aid? I know not, I say, how he can escape on the day of judgment the reproof and chastisement threatened against the slothful servant who hid the talent given to him, that he might *trade with it*. (Matt. xxv.) The master gave him that talent that he might trade with it, but he hid it; and when the master demanded an account of the profit he had received from it, he answered: “Abscondi talentum tuum in terra, ecce habes quod tuum est.” But for hiding the talent the master reproved him, saying: What! I have given you a talent that you might trade with it; this is the talent, but where are the profits? He then took the talent from him, and commanded it to be given to another, and ordered him to be cast into exterior darkness: “Tollite itaque ab eo talentum, et date ei qui habet decem talenta; et inutilem servum ejicite in tenebras exteriores.” To be cast into exterior darkness means, according to the commentators, to be sent into the fire of hell, which gives no light, and to be excluded from heaven. And this passage is applied by St. Ambrose, Calmet, Cornelius à Lapide, and Tirinus, to those who can procure the salvation of souls, and neglect to do it, either through negligence or through a vain fear of committing sin. “Nocent hoc,” says Cornelius, qui ingenio, doctrina aliisque dotibus sibi a Deo da-

tis non utuntur ad suam aliorumque salutem, ob desidiam vel metum peccandi; ab his enim rationem reposcet Christus in die judicii." And St. Gregory says: "Audiant quod talentum qui erogare noluit cum sententia damnationis ejicitur" Peter de Blois writes, "Qui Dei donum in utilitatem alienam communicat, plenius mereatur habere quod habet; qui autem talentum Domini abscondit, quod videtur habere auferetur ab eo." St. John Chrysostom says that he cannot conceive how a priest can be saved who does nothing for the salvation of his neighbor: "Neque id mihi persuasi saluum fieri quemquam posse qui pro proximi sui salute nihil laboris impenderit." (Lib. 6, de sacerdotibus, c. 10.) After having mentioned the parable of the talent, he says that for a priest, the neglect of having employed the talent given to him is criminal, and will be the cause of his damnation: "Neque juvabit talentum sibi traditum non imminuisse, immo hoc ille nomine perit quod non auxisset et duplicasset." (Ibid.) Addressing those who say, "sufficit mihi anima mea," St. Augustine says, "Eja non tibi venit in mentem servus ille qui abscondit talentum?"

Some priests excuse their sloth by saying "that they have their own souls to care for," that "they are afraid of falling into sin," and so on. To this St. Bernard answers: "It is far better to work for the salvation of souls, even if we thereby commit some faults, than to neglect the salvation of souls, in order to labor at our own perfection."

When St. Ignatius declared that he would be willing to risk his eternal happiness in order to save souls, some one said to him: "But, Father, is it prudent to risk your salvation in order to save others?" "What,"

answered the saint, "is God then a tyrant? Do you think he would send me to hell, while I am trying to gain souls for him?"

Some priests excuse themselves by saying, "What is the use of preaching? I preach to the people, and yet I see no improvement." Well, even so; we have at least the satisfaction of having done our duty. The result of our labors we must leave to God. "*Neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat, sed qui incrementum dat, Deus. Unusquisque propriam mercedem accipiet secundum suum laborem.*" (I. Cor. iii, 7.) "*Si autem tu annuntiaveris impio,*" says the Lord, "*et ille non fuerit conversus ab iniquitate sua, ipse quidem in iniquitate sua moritur, tu autem animam tuam liberasti.*" (Ezech. iii, 9.) What was the immediate fruit of all the labors and preaching of our Lord himself? After laboring and suffering for thirty-three years, he had only about five hundred disciples on the day of his Ascension.

St. Augustine says: "The seed that is sown in the ground does not bear fruit immediately. It takes several months before you can reap the harvest. So it is often with the word of God. When you preach, you sow the seed, but you do not always reap the fruit immediately. You must often wait a long time before the fruit appears."

What are we then to think of that priest who seldom or never preaches to the people? for surely that tiresome jeremiade about money every Sunday is not a sermon.

What are we to think of that priest who seldom or never teaches the catechism to his children, but leaves that divine work to young men and women who are themselves sadly in need of instruction?

What are we to think of that priest who shows more

zeal in carousing and card-playing than in instructing the ignorant and hearing confessions ?

What are we to think of that priest who takes more interest in his fast horse than in the immortal souls for whom Jesus Christ shed his blood ?

What are we to think of that priest whose dwelling is better cared for than his church ?

What are we to think of that priest whose drinking cup is cleaner than his chalice ; whose table-cloth and napkin are neater than his vestments and his corporal ?

“O pastor et idolum, relinquens gregem” ! cries the prophet Zacharias. (xi, 17.) Such a priest resembles in truth an idol. He has a mouth and he instructs not ; eyes and he sees not the faults of his people ; he has hands, and he does not help them ; he has feet and he does not go after them. St. Bernard says of those who became priests merely to make a living, and who will not trouble themselves about their flock :

“Bonum erat magis fodere aut etiam mendicare. Venient, venient ante tribunal Christi ; audietur populorum querela, quorum vixerunt stipendiis nec diluerunt peccata.” (De clam. n. 19.) “Væ pastoribus,” cries the prophet, “qui pascebant semetipsos. Lac comedebatis et lanis operiebamini, et quod crassum erat, occidebatis, gregem autem meum non pascebatis. Quod infirmum fuit non consolidastis, et quod ægrotum non sanastis, quod confractum est non alligastis, et quod abjectum est non eduxistis, et quod perierat non quæistis, sed cum austeritate imperabatis eis. Et dispersæ sunt oves meæ eo quod non esset pastor ; et factæ sunt in devorationem omnium bestiarum agri, et dispersæ sunt. Erraverunt greges mei in cunctis montibus et in universo colle ex-

celso, et super omnem faciem terræ dispersi sunt greges mei, et non erat qui requireret, non erat, inquam, qui requireret. Propterea, pastores, audite verbum Domini : Vivo ego, dicit Dominus Deus, ecce ego ipse super pastores, requiram gregem meum de manu eorum." (Ezech. xxxiv, 2-10.)

Second motive of zeal—Charity towards God.

‘There is nothing so pleasing to God as zeal for his glory and for the salvation of souls. “We cannot offer any sacrifice to God,” says St. Gregory, “which is equal to that of zeal of souls.” “There is no service,” says St. Chrysostom, “more agreeable to God than the labor for souls. To employ one’s life in this blessed labor is more pleasing to the divine Majesty than to suffer martyrdom.” “There is nothing,” says Richardus, “that pleases God so much as zeal for souls.” This made St. Teresa say that she envied even more those who were engaged in the salvation of souls than she envied the martyrs. The reason of this is, because there is nothing so pleasing to God as charity;” for as St. Paul says, “charity is the greatest of virtues, and the bond of perfection.” (I. Cor. xii, 13.) Now, the zeal of which we speak is nothing else than ardent charity, which makes us not only love God with all our heart and serve him with all our strength, but makes us also wish that the whole world might love and serve God in the same manner; that his name might be glorified by all men, and that his kingdom might be established everywhere. To feel great joy at whatever contributes towards God’s glory, and to be penetrated with sorrow at the sins which are committed, is the mark of great love for God. Indeed, a good son takes nothing more to heart than the honor and advancement of his

father. His only joy and comfort is to see his father advanced ; all offences and outrages committed against his father, are felt by him even more keenly than if they were committed against himself. In like manner, all those who are inflamed with true zeal for the glory of God find all their joy in seeing God honored and praised by the whole world ; and nothing gives them more pain than to see God offended. “ Simon Joannis diligis me ? Pasce oves meas, pasce agnos meos.” (John, xv, 16.) If you love me, says our Lord to St. Peter, you must show your love. But how ? By your tears ? By your penances ? By the sacrifice of your life ? All these are indeed proofs of love ; but I require a more convincing proof. “ If you love me, feed my sheep.” It is thus that our Lord too speaks to every one of us. “ Ex hoc loco agnoscant fidei magistri,” says St. Cyril, “ non aliter se summo Pastori gratos fore quam si omni studio caveant, ut rationales oves curentur.” “ Hoc maximum ergo Christum amicitie argumentum,” says St. Chrysostom. (De sacerdot. ii, n. 1.)

If there is joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance ; if the one stray sheep brought back to the fold gave so much joy to the angels, what joy must not that priest give to God, who saves not one, but thousands of souls ?

Third motive—charity towards our neighbor.

It cannot be doubted that this zeal is a perfect act of love of God. It is likewise a most excellent act of love of our neighbor. As the love of God consists in rejoicing at whatever conduces to his glory, and in being afflicted at whatever offends him, so in like manner, true love for our neighbor consists in rejoicing at his welfare, in sympathizing with him in his misfortunes, and in trying

to prevent or remedy his sufferings to the best of our power.

Now, what greater misfortune can befall our neighbor than sin? The saints say that if we wish to know whether we love our neighbor, we should see whether we are afflicted at his faults, and filled with joy at his spiritual advancement. "Who is weak," says the Apostle, "and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" Who is he, says the gloss on this passage, that becomes weak in faith, or in any other virtue, without my being afflicted for him, as I would be for myself; and who is in adversity, who is scandalized, or in trouble, and I feel not myself burning with tenderness and compassion? (II Cor. xi, 29.) St. Chrysostom says "that zeal for the salvation of souls is of so great a merit before God that, to give up all our goods to the poor, or to spend our whole life in the exercise of all sorts of austerities, cannot equal the merits of this zeal. The spiritual works of mercy surpass in value the corporal works as much as the value of the soul exceeds that of the body." "Would you not feel happy," says this great saint, "if you could spend large sums of money in corporal works of mercy? Know, then, that he who labors for the salvation of souls does far more; nay, zeal for souls is far more meritorious before God than the working of miracles. What great miracles did Moses perform when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt! Yet all these are nothing when compared with the ardent zeal he displayed when interceding for his people. 'Either pardon them this trespass, or if thou do not, strike me out of the book that thou hast written.' (Exod. xxxii, 31, 32.) "Behold here," continues St. Chrysostom, "the greatest miracles that Moses ever wrought."

Look at the example of our Lord. "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son." (John iii, 16.) See Jesus Christ weeping on straw; see him weeping over Jerusalem; see him sweating blood; see him scourged, crowned with thorns, carrying his cross; see him lifted up on the cross between heaven and earth, between two malefactors; see him suffering for mankind so much that even the sun cannot look upon it; even the rocks burst asunder; and shall not our hearts feel moved at this spectacle of the love and zeal of Jesus Christ. Hear Jesus exclaim: "Father, forgive them;" "I thirst!" that is, I thirst for the salvation of souls; and shall not this cry of Jesus Christ from the cross pierce our hearts and enkindle them with similar thirst for the salvation of souls?

You see thousands of souls ready to fall into hell; you know that God suffered and died for them so ignominious and so painful a death. It is in your power to do so much for their salvation, and will you remain idle? Will you not do all in your power to save them even at the risk of your life? O what cruelty! What! You hear a child weeping and you at once try to console it. You hear a dog whining at the door and you open it straight way. A poor beggar asks for a piece of bread, and you give it to him. And you hear Jesus Christ weeping and crying for souls, and his voice makes no impression. You say with the man in the Gospel: "Trouble me not, the door (of my heart) is now shut. I cannot rise and give thee." (Luke xi.) If an ass, says our Lord, falls into a pit you will pull it out even on the Sabbath-day; and thousands of souls are in danger of falling into hell every day; and shall we refuse to help them? Shall we resemble that

ungodly bishop of Burgos who, on being told by Las Casas that seven thousand children had perished in three months, said : " What a fool you are ! What is this to me, and what is it to the King ?" To which Las Casas replied : " Is it nothing to your lordship that all these souls should perish forever ? O great and eternal God ! And whom then does it concern ?" (Life of Las Casas, by Arthur Helps). Is our heart so hardened that we can listen with indifference to the terrible words : " Accursed, depart into everlasting fire."

St. Alphonsus used to say : " Who knows what God requires of me ? Perhaps the salvation of certain souls may depend on some of my prayers, penances and other good works." (Life, II, vol. I. p. 259.) What shall we answer when accused before the tribunal of God by those souls who have been lost through our want of zeal of souls ? One shall say : " My soul would be saved had you prayed more on such and such an occasion." Another will say : " My soul would enjoy God forever had you only averted the wrath of God by works of penance." Another will say : " The hunter spends whole days in cold and snow to catch a little game, and you could have easily saved my soul, had you but taken a little more pains. But instead of laboring for souls, you spent your time in vain, frivolous, and even sinful amusements." Alas ! what answer shall we give ! To have no zeal for souls is to see, with indifference, the blood of Jesus Christ trodden under foot ; it is to see the image and likeness of God lying in the mire and neglect to lift it up ; it is to despise the Blessed Trinity : the Father who created that immortal soul ; the Son who redeemed it by his cruel death on the Cross ; and the Holy

Ghost who sanctified it; it is to belong to that class of shepherds of whom the Lord spoke by his prophet:

“Son of man, prophesy concerning the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to the shepherds: Thus saith the Lord God: Woe to the shepherds of Israel—My flock you did not feed; the weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed; that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again; neither have you sought that which was lost; and my sheep were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field, and were scattered. My sheep have wandered in every mountain and in every high hill; and there was none, I say, that sought them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Behold I myself come upon the shepherds; I will require my flock at their hand.”(Ezech. xxxiv, 2, 11.) To have no zeal for souls is to hide the five talents which the Lord has given us, instead of gaining five other talents. Ah! will not the Lord say: “And the unprofitable servant cast ye out in the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. xxv, 30.)

The devil and his agents are laboring day and night to ruin souls, and shall we be so little concerned about their eternal loss, though we know that one soul is worth more than the whole visible universe? Ah! let us always bear in mind that one immortal soul is of as much value as the blood of Jesus Christ himself.

On the day of judgment such priests will be put to shame by the poor man of whom we read in the life of St. Francis de Sales. One day this holy, zealous bish-

op, while visiting his diocese, reached the top of a high mountain, overwhelmed with fatigue and cold. His hands and feet were completely benumbed. While he was viewing with astonishment those immense blocks of ice, the inhabitants told him that some days before a shepherd, running after a stray sheep, had fallen into one of these tremendous precipices. They added that his fate would never have been known, had not his companion discovered his hat on the edge of the precipice. The good man imagined that the good shepherd might be still alive, or if he had perished, he wished at least to give him a Christian burial. He descended this icy precipice by means of ropes. When he was drawn up, he was pierced through with cold; he held in his arms his companion, who was dead and like a frozen block of ice. St. Francis, hearing this, turned to his attendants who were disheartened with the extreme fatigue which they had every day to encounter, and said: "Some persons imagine that we do too much, and yet we do far less than these poor people. You have heard how this poor shepherd lost his life while trying to find a stray sheep, and how the other exposed himself to the danger of perishing in order to procure for his friend a Christian burial, which under these circumstances might have been dispensed with. These examples speak to us in forcible language. This charity puts us to shame; we do far less for the souls entrusted to our care than these poor people do for the sheep confided to their charge."

The holy prelate then heaved a great sigh and said: "My God, what a beautiful lesson for bishops and pastors! This poor shepherd has sacrificed his life to save

a stray sheep, and I, alas ! have so little zeal for the salvation of souls ! The least obstacle suffices to deter me and make me calculate every step and every trouble. O Great God ! give me true zeal and the genuine spirit of a good shepherd ! Ah ! how many shepherds of souls will this herdsman judge !” Alas ! how true is this remark ! If we saw even our enemies surrounded by fire, we would think of means to rescue them from the danger ; and yet we see thousands of souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ, on the point of being cast into hell ; and shall we do nothing to save them ?

Fourth motive — Gratitude.

Holy Scripture tells us that, when the holy man Tobias considered the great benefits which God had bestowed upon his family through the angel Raphael, he was seized with fear ; he was at a loss how to express his gratitude ; he and his family fell prostrate upon their faces for three hours, thanking and blessing the Lord. He called his son Tobias, and said to him : “ What can we give to this holy man that is come with thee ?” And the young Tobias said to his father : “ Father, what wages shall we give him, or what can be worthy of his benefits ? He conducted me, and brought me safe again ; he received the money of Gabelus ; he caused me to have my wife, and he chased from her the evil spirit ; he gave joy to her parents ; myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish ; thee also he hath made to see the light of heaven, and we are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for these things ? But I beseech thee, my father, to desire him that he would vouchsafe to accept of half of all the things that

have been brought." (Tobias, chap. xii.) It is thus that this holy family showed themselves thankful to God and his holy angel for the divine blessings.

O priest! Think of all God has done for you. He has made you his angel. He has conferred upon you a dignity far more sublime than that of the angel Raphael. He has given you powers which far surpass those of all the angels in heaven. Your offices are of greater importance to the people than those of the angels. The benefits which God, through you, bestows upon men far surpasses those which he bestows through his holy angels.

He has made you the co-operator in a work most divine—in the salvation and sanctification of souls. "*Divinorum omnium divinissimum est cooperari Deo in salutem animarum,*" says St. Denys. (Coel. Hier. c. 5) "I know not," says Richard of St. Victor, "if any one in this world can receive a greater grace than to be empowered to transform wicked men into saints, and slaves of the devil into children of God. Will you say perhaps that the power of raising the dead to life is greater? Which then is greater, to give life to the body or to give life to the soul? The body after all must die again and rot, but the soul shall live forever." (L. 1. de Præ. in cast, c. 4.)

Moreover, how many benefits does God daily bestow upon you? Do not all good and perfect gifts proceed from the Most High, the Father of light? Ah! must you not exclaim with the prophet: "*Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus, quæ retribuit mihi?*" (Ps. cxv, 12.) What can be worthy of his benefits? But see, he transfers all his claims to your brethren. He will be satisfied,

if you do all in your power for the salvation of your neighbor.

Besides, how great is the number of our own sins? How enormous is their weight? How heinous their nature? How shall we cancel and atone for them all? One of the best means to satisfy the justice of God is to keep others from offending him and to induce them to serve him with all their heart. The Apostle St. James teaches this consoling truth. "He who makes a sinner forsake the errors of his life will save the soul of the sinner and cover a multitude of his own sins." (v, 20.)

The Gospel tells us that a certain man, seeing himself cured, wished to follow Jesus Christ in acknowledgment of the great benefit he had received. Our Saviour, however, did not permit him, but said to him: "Return home and recount the wonders that God has wrought in thee, and he went about the town preaching the wonders that Jesus had wrought in him." (Luke, viii, 39.)

What God requires of you in acknowledgment of the favor he has conferred on you, by drawing you out of the abyss of sin is, to endeavor to draw your neighbor also out of sin and to urge him to serve God with all his heart.

This is reasonable. We know that sin is the greatest of all evils, and the remission of sin is the greatest of all blessings. By sin, the infinite Majesty, Bounty and Sanctity of God are grievously offended. Sin is, in fact, a deicide; it could be expiated only by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, sin is remitted by the infusion of grace, by which we become the children and heirs of God, and even partakers of the divine nature, according to the words of St. Peter. (Epist. 2, c. i, 4.) For this reason

the Prophet Micheas exclaims: "*Quis Deus similis tui, qui aufers iniquitatem!*" The justification of the sinner is a greater work than the creation of the entire world. "*Majus opus est ex impio justum facere, quam creare cœlum et terram,*" says St. Augustine, a truth which St. Thomas proves by saying that the least degree of sanctifying grace is worth more than the whole visible world. "*Bonum gratiæ unius hominis majus est, quam bonum naturæ totius universi.*" (St. Thom. p. g. 113, art. 9.) God would not have given his life for the visible world, says St. Bernard, (*Medit.*); he delivered himself up to an ignominious death only for the soul of man.

Moreover, God not only takes away sin from the soul, and delivers it from the worst of enemies, but he casts sin so far away that, according to the prophet Micheas (c. vii.), he casts it into the depth of the sea, nay, on the day of judgment he will cast it, together with all sinners, into the abyss of hell.

The saints have always exalted and praised God for this admirable grace. St. Peter would melt into tears whenever he heard the cock crow; for he was thereby reminded of his denial of Christ. This fault urged him continually to give himself up entirely to the service of Christ and to remain faithful to Jesus even unto the death of the cross. In his first Epistle (chapt. ii, 9.) he exults and rejoices at this grace, and congratulates the Gentiles upon it. "*You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, that you may declare his virtues; Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Who, in time past, were not a people, but are now the people of God. Who had not obtained mercy: but now have obtained mercy.*"

St. Paul, too, was enraptured at the thought of his conversion : It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, he cries, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief ; but for this cause have I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all patience, for the information of them that shall believe in him unto life everlasting. Now, to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (I Tim. i, 15-18.)

St. Magdalen, having been assured by our Lord that her sins were forgiven, retired into solitude, there to spend the rest of her life in shedding tears of sorrow and love, in prayer and contemplation, and in making acts of love and thanksgiving, saying, with the spouse in the canticles : “A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me ;— compass me about with apples, because I languish with love.” (Capt. I, 12, ii, 5.)

St. Mary of Egypt, after her conversion, spent forty-seven years in solitude, continually repeating the words of holy Writ : “The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.”

If we have imitated these saints in offending God, let us also imitate them in atoning for our sins, by serving him in the spirit of penance and humility, by making repeated acts of thanksgiving, love and fervor ; but especially by trying, to the best of our power, to rescue souls from the abyss of sin, and by offering them to God in compensation for the evil we have done. If we truly repent of our sins, if we are truly grateful to God for having pardoned us, we shall be glad to sacrifice to God’s honor and the salvation of souls, our lives and

whatever we have received from his bounty ; we shall be glad to consecrate all our faculties eternally to the service of God. We will pray and labor without intermission that God alone may reign in our own soul ; that all tongues may sound forth his praises, and that all men may be united in him. We shall ardently desire to be always occupied with the angels and saints in doing his will, in loving him, and in glorifying his adorable name. To save even one soul, we will gladly brave every danger. We shall be glad even to lay down our life a thousand times, were it possible, to prevent one offence against the divine Majesty.

Would to God I could take you to the Martyr's Room in Paris, where priests who love their God and their neighbors are continually preparing themselves to go and preach the Gospel among the pagans ! to suffer and die for the faith ! Would to God you could see there that army of generous soldiers of Jesus Christ, who aspire to the pacific conquest of infidel realms ; who burn with the hope of shedding their blood on the battle-fields of faith, sacrifice, and martyrdom ; who very often obtain after a life of labor, toils, and torments, the ensanguined crown which has been the object of their life-long aspirations !

When at last they have attained the crown, when their head has fallen beneath the pagan's sword, their vestments, their hallowed relics, the instruments of their martyrdom, are reverently gathered by pious Christians and sent to Paris ; and the hall where all these precious relics are gathered is called the Martyr's Room. The sight alone of this sanctuary, fresh with the blood of those lovers of Jesus Christ, is the most eloquent of sermons. These relics

speaking, in language of fire, of the zeal and charity of the priest. Bones, skeletons, and skulls of martyred priests, enclosed in glass cases; instruments of martyrdom; paintings representing insufferable torments; iron chains which tortured the limbs of the confessors of faith; ropes which strangled them; crucifixes crimsoned with the blood of those who impressed on them their last kiss of love; garments, ensanguined linen,—oh, what a sight! Great God, what a lesson!

Here a huge cangue, which rested for six long months on the shoulders of Bishop Borie; there a mat clogged with the blood of John Baptist Cornay, who was beheaded and quartered upon it. Near by, a painting describing the horrible torment of the blessed Marchant, whom the executioners chopped from head to foot until he died of suffering and exhaustion. Everywhere, in every corner you behold the image of the zealous priest dying for the love of God and his brethren, and also the image of the fiend in human shape crucifying, with indefatigable hatred, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the person of his priests.

A zealous confessor was once called to a dying sinner. The unhappy man had led a long life of sin, and was now obstinate; he did not wish to hear of God, or the priest. The good priest tried every means, tears, promises, threats, prayers, but all in vain. The dying wretch was hardened. At last the good priest fell on his knees and begged God to give him this soul. He offered, for his sake, to endure any pain that God would inflict on him. An interior voice then said to him: "Your request shall be granted on condition that you are willing to fall back into your former illness." He had formerly been subject to violent fits of colic.

The good priest offered himself generously. He then went once more to the dying man and found him in the very best dispositions. The sinner made his confession with every sign of true sorrow and offered up his life in atonement for his sins. He received all the sacraments and died in the arms of his confessor.

The prayers of the good priest were heard, but no sooner did he return home than he was seized with the most violent pains, which continued to increase until at last he died the victim of his heroic zeal.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRIEST IN THE PULPIT—OBLIGATION OF PREACHING

—WHAT WE MUST PREACH.

The principal duty of a pastor is to preach the Word of God. St. Thomas calls this duty “principalissimum officium.” It is by faith and the invocation of the name of God that we are saved: “Qui credit in me, habet vitam æternam.” (John vi, 47.) “Omnis quicumque invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit.” (Acts ii, 21.) Now the graces of faith and prayer come from preaching, as the stream comes from its source. “Quomodo invocabunt in quem non crediderunt?” asks St. Paul. “Aut quomodo credent ei quem non audierunt? Quomodo autem audient sine prædicante? Ergo fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi.” (Rom. x, 14, 17.)

God has never failed to send his ambassadors to mankind. Ever since the days of Christ God has spoken through his priests as he did of old by his prophets. He has imposed on his priests the same obligations and the same penalties that he imposed upon the prophets. “Clama, ne cesses; quasi tuba exalta vocem tuam.” (Isai. lviii, 1.) “When I say to the wicked: O wicked man, thou shalt surely die: if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way: that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but I will require his blood at thy hand.*” (Ezech. xxxiii, 8.)

Jesus Christ has given to his priests the mission that he himself received from his heavenly Father. He de-

clares that this mission was to preach the Gospel to the poor. "Sicut me misit Pater, et ego mitto vos." (John xx, 21.) "Evangelizare pauperibus misit me." (Luke iv, 18.) "Eamus in proximos vicos et civitates, ut et ibi prædicem; ad hoc enim veni." (Mark, i, 38.)

Before his Ascension into heaven our Lord promulgated once more the all-important duty of preaching. They are the last words he addresses to those whom he has commissioned to continue his work: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth; the whole universe belongs to me by right of heritage; I have gained heaven by my labors and sufferings. The earth yet remains to be conquered. I rely on you to subject it to the empire of my grace. Go then, teach all nations; preach the Gospel to every creature." The Apostles understood the obligations imposed on them. "They went forth and preached everywhere." (Mark xvi, 20.) How many efforts were made to keep them from preaching; they were forbidden to preach; they were threatened with the severest punishments, if they continued to do so; but they disregarded both the commands and the menaces of the enemies of Christ. They obeyed God rather than men. (Acts v, 29.) St. Paul declared that it was his sacred duty to preach the Gospel. He even uttered a kind of anathema against himself, if ever he neglected this duty. "*Vae mihi, si non evangelizavero.*" Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel!" His epistles to Timothy and Titus are, as it were, a manual of the apostolic and pastoral life. The principal point on which he insists, is preaching. He adjures his two disciples, and with them all the pastors of the Church, by all that is sacred, he adjures them by the presence of God; by Jesus

Christ, who will judge the living and the dead; he adjures them by the coming of Christ, by his eternal Kingdom, to preach the divine word, to preach it in season and out of season, to use every means of persuasion that the most ardent charity can inspire—argument, entreaty, reproof, but above all, unutterable patience. “I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming and his Kingdom: Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, argue, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine.” (2 Tim. iv, 1, 2.)

The obligation of preaching is also imposed by the Church upon all her pastors. One of the apostolic canons ordains that, if a priest who has charge of souls, neglects to break to them the bread of God’s Word, he himself should be deprived of the Eucharistic Bread; and if he perseveres in his sinful silence, he should be deposed. (*Quod si in socordia perseveret, deponatur.*) No one can study the history of the Church without perceiving that the preaching of the Gospel has always been the great object of her solicitude. In the decrees of her Councils, especially in those of the Council of Trent, she never fails to speak of the obligation of pastors to preach the Word of God. “*Statuit ac decrevit sancta synodus. . . , ut quicumque parochiales, vel alias curam animarum habentes ecclesias. . . obtinent, per se vel alios idoneos, si legitime impediti fuerint, diebus saltem dominicis et festis solemnibus, plebes sibi commissas pro suâ et earum capacitate pascant salutaribus verbis. . . , docendo quæ scire omnibus necessarium est ad salutem.*” The Council arms the Bishops with her anathemas and charges them to use her censures against those dumb

pastors whom the Holy Spirit has solemnly branded by calling them dumb dogs not able to bark. "*Canes muti, non valentes latrare.*" (Isai. lvi, 6.) The all-important duty of preaching the Gospel was certainly never more binding than in our own age. What the Fathers of the Council of Trent say on this duty applies more emphatically to our age and country :

"As the preaching of the divine word," they say, "should never be interrupted in the Church of God, so in these our days it becomes necessary to labor, with more than ordinary zeal and piety, to nurture and strengthen the faithful with sound and wholesome doctrine, as with the food of life : for false prophets have gone forth into the world (1 John iv, 1), with various and strange doctrines (Heb. xiii, 9), to corrupt the minds of the faithful, of whom the Lord has said : "I sent them not, and they ran ; I spoke not to them, yet they prophesied." (Jer. xxiii, 21.)

"In this unholy work their impiety, versed as it is in all the arts of Satan, has been carried to such extremes, that it would seem almost impossible to confine it within bounds ; and did we not rely on the splendid promises of the Saviour, who declared that he had built his Church on so solid a foundation that the gates of hell should never prevail against it (Matt. xvi, 18), we should be filled with the most alarming apprehensions, lest, beset on every side by such a host of enemies, assailed by so many and such formidable engines, the Church of God should, in these days, fall beneath their combined efforts. Not to mention those illustrious states which heretofore professed, in piety and holiness, the Catholic faith, transmitted to them by their ancestors, but which are now

gone astray, wandering from the path of truth, and openly declaring that their best claims of piety are founded on a total abandonment of the faith of their fathers,—there is no region however remote, no place however securely guarded, no corner of the Christian republic, into which this pestilence has not sought secretly to insinuate itself. Those who intended to corrupt the minds of the faithful, seeing that they could not hold immediate personal intercourse with all, and thus pour into their ears their poisoned doctrines, employed other means to disseminate error and impiety. Besides those voluminous works by which they sought to subvert the Catholic faith, they also composed innumerable smaller books, which, veiling their errors under the semblance of piety, deceived with incredible facility the simple and the incautious.” (Preface to the Catechism of the Council of Trent) “It is incumbent upon the ministers of the altar,” says our Holy Father, Pius IX, in his address of 1877 to the Lenten preachers, “to lift up their voices as loudly as possible, to save society from the abyss.”

Preaching is almost the only means that the majority of priests have to counteract the false doctrines, loose morals and lying accusations of the modern godless press. We cannot all be editors ; we have not all time to write articles every week for the papers ; but we *can* warn, encourage and instruct the people in the pulpit at least every Sunday and holiday.

The priest who neglects his duty in this point is but a drowsy shepherd, or, as the prophet says : “A dumb watch-dog, who suffers the hellish wolf to slaughter and carry off the poor lambs and sheep confided to his care.”

Some excuse themselves by saying : “ I have no time, nor talents for preaching. My people are instructed ; they know their religion well enough. There is too much preaching. The people do not come to the sermons.” No matter what excuses the careless priest may have, the strict obligation remains : “ *Euntes docete.*” O how many souls are saved ; how many sins prevented ; how many scandals removed ; how many good works encouraged by preaching the word of God properly ! See all the good that is done during even one mission ! How many stray sheep are brought back to the fold ! How many marriages revalidated ; how many sacrilegious confessions repaired ; how many enemies reconciled ; how many restitutions are made ; how many sinful habits are broken off ! How often is sinful company given up ! How many are enlightened and encouraged to follow their vocation ! How many wanderers have been brought from heresy and infidelity to the bosom of the Church ! Many become careless Catholics and even infidels, and many remain in heresy and infidelity, because they do not hear the word of God.

“ You say, perhaps,” says St. Chrysostom, “ what good does all my preaching do ? I always do some good, if I can only get the people to listen to me. In the first place, I do my duty. Look at the sower in the Gospel. He went and sowed his seed. Part fell upon the wayside ; part fell among thorns ; part fell on the rocks ; and finally some of the seed fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit a hundred fold. Three parts of the seed were lost ; only one part brought forth fruit and yet the sower continued to sow his seed ; he did not grow disheartened.

If all will not listen to me, at least half will. If half will not listen, at least one-third, one-tenth will. And even if only one listens to me I am content. To save even one sheep is much. Our Lord offered up his heart's blood even for one soul, and shall I remain indifferent? No! I shall continue to preach, even if no one listens to me."

2. *What we must preach.*

Jesus Christ has taught what we must preach. An ambassador goes by the instructions which he has received. He treats of the affairs with which he has been entrusted. The mission of the priest is to announce the Gospel. "Prædicate evangelium. Docete omnes gentes, docentes eos servare omnia quæcunque mandavi vobis." All pastors of souls must say of Jesus who sent them, what Jesus himself said of his heavenly Father: "Quæ audiivi ab eo, hæc loquor in mundo. (John viii, 26.) Mea doctrina non est mea, sed ejus qui misit me." (John vii, 16.) The end for which Jesus Christ instituted the ministry of preaching is the salvation of mankind. We must, therefore, preach all those truths of our religion that lead mankind to eternal salvation. Above all we must preach what is *de necessitate medii* and *de necessitate præcepti*. Docendo ea quæ scire omnibus necessarium est ad salutem. (Conc. Trid.) Hence we must preach the dogmas of the Church. The foundation of moral theology is dogmatic theology, without which everything is bereft of authority and life. Those truths which are based on dogmatic theology have a holy and imposing majesty.

2. We must preach what we have to do in order to be saved—that is, moral theology. Good works are nec-

essary for salvation. Hence the good pastor should apply himself diligently to reform and elevate the morals of his flock according to the decree of the Council of Trent. “*Docendo. . . vitia quæ eos declinare, virtutes quas sectari oporteat, ut pœnam æternam evadere et cœlestem patriam consequi valeant.*”

3. We should often speak of the eternal truths, such as the end of man, death, judgment, hell and heaven. All truly apostolic men have made it a rule to preach these great truths repeatedly, as they are especially calculated to induce the people to reform their lives and to practise virtue.

4. We must often speak of the necessity of prayer for salvation, of the necessity of avoiding the proximate occasion of sin and show to the people that those who wilfully remain in the proximate occasion of sin cannot be absolved; also that those parents who wilfully leave their sons and daughters in the proximate occasions of sin, cannot be absolved.

5. But above all, we must preach Jesus Christ himself and Jesus Christ crucified: “*Nos autem prædicamus Christum crucifixum,*” says St. Paul. (1 Cor. i, 13.) We must make him known to the world, such as the prophets have announced him, such as he has revealed himself, by his doctrines, his virtues and his miracles, by his life and by his death. This is what he expects of us. We are not called to deliver philosophical dissertations, human teachings and profane discourses. “*Prædicate Evangelium.*” Preach the word of God. “*Holy Scripture,*” says St. Charles Borromeo, “*is the Bishop’s garden.*” “*Few walk in it,*” says Cardinal Manning, “*and fewer dress it.*” Hence there is so much of the word of man,

and so little of the word of God in sermons. “*Sal etenim terræ non sumus, si corda audientium non condimus. Quia dum nos ab orationis et eruditionis usu cessamus, sal infatuatum est.*” (St. Gregory the Great.) By whose fault is this, but of priests, who do not study, and therefore do not teach the Word of God to the people! Have we not reason to ask, “Lord, is it I?”

There are many priests who complain of receiving but very few Mass-stipends. Whose fault is it? Do they make known Jesus Christ in the holy sacrifice of the Mass? A certain priest who received but very seldom the honorary of a Mass, bought the book “*Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,*” and preached to his congregation chapter for chapter. He soon received more Masses than he was able to say. Let us not be deceived with regard to the ignorance of the people in religious matters. At a time when religious instructions was more generally given than now, a celebrated writer said: “Those who have great experience in the apostolic ministry and zeal for the salvation of souls, are pained by the ignorance of the majority of Christians. This ignorance in religious matters is found not only among people of the lower classes, but even among the gentry, among those who look upon themselves as well educated, and even among men of letters.” (Fleury.) Now, not to preach plainly and practically is not to preach at all.

What folly to speak of abstruse questions that are above the people’s understanding, and to neglect to teach those truths that all must absolutely know to be saved.

Bourdaloue is not the only preacher who, on his death-bed, had cause to regret not having spoken oftener of the eternal truths.

The Council of Paris, held in the ninth century, after quoting the words, "*Si me dicente ad impium . . . non fueris locutus, ipse morietur . . . sanguinem autem ejus de manu tua requiram,*" uttered this cry of alarm, which is well calculated to disturb the false peace of certain pastors: "*Ecce quale periculum prædicatoribus, nisi strenue utiliterque prædicaverint!*" It is not sufficient merely to preach. We escape the danger only in preaching "*strenue utiliterque.*" Now is there any strength, any fire, any real utility in those languid, extemporaneous exhortations, where indifference and coldness appear no less in him who speaks than in those who listen? We are responsible for all the souls that heaven has confided to our care. We must, therefore, vary the subject and form of our instructions to suit the divers wants of the people. We must give milk to the weak and bread to the strong. We must neglect no class, no condition, no person. We must try to instruct by others those whom our voice cannot reach. We must endeavor to instruct privately those who do not come to our sermons. "*Publice et per domos.*" Oh! how many are lost because they have never learned, or have forgotten the necessary truths of salvation! Woe to us, if any child, or old or sick person were deprived of the sacraments, because we did not do all in our power to prepare them and give them the necessary knowledge! We must answer before God for every soul confided to our care. "*Sanguinem autem ejus de manu tua requiram.*" We must be all to all, cost what it may. There must not remain in our fold a single sheep or lamb that is a stranger to our pastoral solicitude. Let us weigh well the words of St. Gregory: "*Ad messem multam operarii pauci sunt,*

quod sine gravi mærore loqui non possumus; nam etsi sunt qui bona audiant, desunt qui dicant. Ecce mundus sacerdotibus plenus est, sed tamen in messe, Dei rarus valde reperitur operator. . . quia officium quidem sacerdotale suscepimus, sed opus officii non implemus. Relinquunt Deum hi qui nobis commissi sunt, et tacemus; in pravis actibus jacent, et correptionis manum non tendimus: quotidie per multas nequitias pereunt, et eos ad infernum tendere negligenter videmus. (In Evang. t. 1, hom. 17.)

CHAPTER III.

TO COMPLY WITH THE OBLIGATION OF PREACHING, THE
PRIEST MUST BE WELL PREPARED. HE MUST
CLOTHE THE WORD OF GOD IN CORRECT LAN-
GUAGE AND DELIVER IT IN AN ATTRAC-
TIVE, PLAIN STYLE.

In our century great progress has been made in the art of teaching. Almost everywhere competent teachers can be found. They understand that they must begin by studying the capacity of those whom they are to teach, their way of thinking and speaking, their ideas, their character, their turn of mind. To these, they know, they must accommodate themselves. They are expert in illustrating and simplifying their instruction. They are persuaded that they must go over it again and again, in order that when it is once understood, it may not be again forgotten. They are provided with many little arts and contrivances for rousing the attention and interest of their pupils. In this way admirable results are obtained, to the great satisfaction of pupils, parents, managers and inspectors.

Now, if such pains are taken in securing success in profane sciences, what pains should be taken in securing success in the science of religion! The science of religion is, of all sciences, the most excellent as well as the most important. No subject, therefore, should be treated with greater care and skill than the subject of religion.

Catholics believe all the truths proposed by the holy Church ; but many do not seem to realize sufficiently the truths that they believe. They have not thought much upon them. They have not penetrated their depths. Their knowledge is superficial, and their devotion is consequently cold. This, for many reasons, is the case in this country. Here we have large congregations and not a sufficient number of priests, and these are occupied in building churches and in a variety of work which has been already done in older countries. The people often are either far from the Church or struggling for the means of living ; they have grown careless ; they have failed to receive the instruction which they require ; or if they did receive it, it was given in a cold, superficial manner. To secure, then, success, the teacher must himself be well instructed. Only those who are complete masters of their science can make it simple and easy to others. They are not afraid of getting into difficulties or making mistakes. Now, nowhere are mistakes more dangerous, nowhere is neglect more fatal than in religion. No labor should be spared to prepare ourselves properly for preaching the Word of God.

I. *The Preacher to be successful must be well prepared.*

The ministry of preaching has established the Church. This ministry has also preserved the Church. The preaching of the Gospel is the principle of all supernatural and Christian life ; it is the means established by God to give us the faith and to increase our faith. "Fides ex auditu." By preaching we glorify God and save immortal souls. Now he who does not prepare himself for so sublime a function, tempts God ; he is wanting in the respect due to God's holy word ; he proves himself

unworthy of the great mission confided to him. Of course I do not speak here of a case of real necessity which may give us a special claim to the assistance of the Holy Ghost and the indulgence of our hearers. He expects that God will work a miracle to encourage his presumption and to recompense his negligence. He expects that God will reward him for regaling his hearers with a discourse in which there is no order, nor solidity, nor unction. Now is not this tempting God?

He who preaches without preparation exposes himself to an embarrassment which he cannot conceal; he falls into repetitions; he loses himself in digressions without end; he is in the greatest danger of using improper expressions and speaking without dignity. Is he not, by such conduct, guilty of irreverence towards the word of God?

He who preaches without preparation degrades the divine ministry in the minds of those who hear him as well as of those to whom they communicate their impressions. He fills his hearers with loathing for the word of God which is so necessary for their spiritual life, and thereby makes them careless in the practice of their religion. Does he not, by such conduct, dishonor the adorable Master in whose name he speaks?

He who neglects to prepare his sermon properly is often in danger of making grave blunders, uttering heresies, and so on. Even the most experienced theologians do not always find immediately the proper expression. The priest must always preach so as to deserve the praise which was bestowed on his divine Master: "*Magister, viam Dei in veritate doces.*" His doctrine must be sound and irreprehensible. "*Verbum*

sanum et irreprehensibile." (Tit. ii, 8.) Without diligent preparation the priest is in danger of preaching at random. We must carefully prune our discourse and cut off all unnecessary verbiage. Our language must be always clear and concise. Now this is not an easy task for him who preaches without preparation.

Moreover, he who preaches without preparation, will not be able to make his sermon interesting. Those lively and striking images, those natural comparisons, that beautiful order, that diction pure, graceful and simple, all these qualities of true eloquence, by which souls are attracted and edified, are utterly wanting in those who habitually preach without preparation. Hence so many windy and wearisome sermons and instructions; hence the truth of the proverbs: "A sermon which costs the preacher little to compose, costs the audience a great deal to listen to." And "That which costs but little is worth no more than it costs." "No preparation, no blessing."

The same precept that obliges us to preach, obliges us also to preach properly and usefully. It is true that God's action is independent of ours. God often sanctifies souls by means the most unforeseen and unexpected. Nevertheless, it is also true that God wishes his ministers, to employ the means established by his Providence for winning souls.

It is true that it has pleased God to bring men to the faith and to save them by the folly of preaching. "Placuit Deo per stultitiam prædicationis salvos facere credentes" (1 Cor. i, 21.); it is no less true that our preaching must be wise and prudent, prepared by prayer and study. Even in the first ages of the Church, when nearly all

the successors of the Apostles were endowed with extraordinary gifts and performed striking miracles, St. Paul required Timothy to instruct himself and others. "Attende lectioni, exhortationi et doctrinæ." The Apostle himself wished to review his books, and he asked his disciple to bring them to him (II. Tim. iv, 13.) We must, always, endeavor to say the best things and say them in the best manner. It is related of St. John Chrysostom that he never invited any one to his table, in order that he might have more time to prepare his instructions, applying to himself the words of the Apostle, "Non est æquum nos derelinquere verbum Dei et ministrare mensis." (Act, vi, 2.)

St. Charles Borromeo did not consider himself excused from this preparation, even in his busiest moments and notwithstanding the facility which he had acquired from long study and frequent practice.

St. Alphonsus, in spite of the simplicity of style and expression that he requires in the preacher, never allowed the members of his society (the Redemptorist Fathers) to ascend the pulpit unless they had first written what they intended to say. He obliged all to observe this rule until, by study and practice, they had acquired such an aptitude for preaching as to render this minute preparation unnecessary. And even then he required them to meditate profoundly on the subject on which they were to speak, and to make at least a well-defined and substantial plan of their discourse.

II. *The Word of God should be clothed in good language.*

St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and other great saints, in preparing for the ministry, spared no pains to render themselves as perfect as possible in the art of

true apostolic eloquence. If the Fathers of the Church seem sometimes to despise eloquence, they speak only of the affected and superfluous ornaments of rhetoric, which only tickle the ear, and dishonor the grandeur and dignity of our mysteries.

A too flowery and pompous style destroys the noble simplicity which best suits the dignity of the sacred truths. This noble simplicity shines inimitably in the inspired Writings and renders their divine eloquence superior to the most polished sentences of profane orators.

St. Gregory Nazianzen and other Fathers of the Church teach us that, though the divine truths are "not to be preached in the persuasive words of human wisdom," yet we must not despise the aids of true eloquence.

St. Basil excellently observes that, though the Holy Scriptures and the maxims of the saints are the main study of Christians, yet eloquence and other branches of literature are the leaves which serve as an ornament and the protection to the fruit. He therefore advises students to prepare themselves for the sacred ministry, by studying diligently the best orators. He adds, however, that those authors in which are found examples or maxims dangerous to virtue should be carefully shunned.

Julian the apostate felt convinced that he could not undermine the Christian religion so long as its pastors and defenders were among the most learned men of the empire. He therefore forbade the Christians to teach grammar, eloquence, or philosophy—a law of which these Fathers loudly complained as the most base and unjust contrivance of tyranny.

Those pastors, then, who degrade their sublime office by want of method in their discourses, or by low and vulgar expressions, dishonor God whose ambassadors they are ; they depreciate his divine word and by their carelessness and sloth give the faithful a contempt and distaste for one of the most inestimable treasures which God has confided to their care. Every one who is called to the care of souls is bound to make strenuous efforts to qualify himself for his office. Now the principal office of the pastor is to publish to men the great truths of salvation. He must, therefore, preach in a manner befitting the importance of the sacred truths. This is the indispensable duty of every pastor, for on it depends the salvation of the greater part of those committed to his care.

III. *The Word of God must be delivered in an attractive, plain style.*

In announcing the Word of God we must take into consideration the special needs of the people. Now those who assist at our sermons, are often rude and illiterate, incapable of understanding high-flown discourses. A celebrated missionary used to say : “ When I prepare a sermon, I imagine that the greater part of my audience are ignorant. I have an eye to the multitude of children, old people, servants, laborers and so on, of whom there are hundreds. I adapt my discourse to their understanding. A preacher should be a logician and a rhetorician ; that is, he must be able to teach and admonish properly. When he speaks of any truth of our religion, he must first define this truth and show what it is ; secondly, he must produce sentences from the Scripture to prove and to strengthen it ; thirdly, he must ex-

plain it by examples ; fourthly, he must adorn it with comparisons ; and lastly he must admonish and arouse the indolent, correct the disobedient, and reprove the authors of false doctrines.”

When I was a student at college I heard sermons regularly for five years ; but I could understand but very little of them. This fact, since I have become a priest, has been always before my mind whenever I composed a sermon or an instruction. I said to myself : If I, after having studied for several years, could not understand the sermons I heard, how will the people who have studied so little, who have learned their catechism only superficially, be able to understand my sermons and instructions unless I speak in a plain and popular manner. Hence I have tried to be as plain as possible in all my instructions and writings. I confess, it is at first difficult to speak and write in a simple, popular style ; but by dint of perseverance we can overcome every difficulty.

What a pity to see so many poor people leaving the church after a sermon without having understood what the good priest was talking about. O how many sublime mysteries could our Lord have taught ! He was the eternal Wisdom of the Father, and yet with what admirable prudence did he adapt his words to the characters, dispositions and the wants of those who listened to him ! If he speaks to the doctors of the law he employs strong arguments, because they are capable of understanding them ; he presses them by proofs from Scriptures. *Scrutamini Scripturas.*

But when he addresses the people, nothing is more simple than his words. He makes use of short maxims easy to remember, familiar comparisons drawn from sur-

rounding objects, such as the wine, the seed, the fig-tree, the sheep, the flowers of the fields, and so on. He always adapts his language to the capacity of his auditors. "Prout poterant audire." (Matt. iv, 33.) Such has always been the method of Jesus Christ, his Apostles and his saints.

" Would I describe a preacher such as Paul,
 Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
 Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
 His masters-strokes, and draw from his design;
 I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
 In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
 And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
 And natural in gesture; much impress'd
 Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
 And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
 May feel it too; affectionate in look,
 And tender in address, as well becomes
 A messenger of grace to guilty man."

— *Cowper's Task*, b. ii.

St. Alphonsus says in his "Selva": "It will be useful to abridge here what the celebrated Muratori has written in his golden little treatise on popular eloquence. There are, he says, two sorts of eloquence: the sublime and the popular. The former is employed in the composition of discourses which treat of lofty subjects, and contain ingenious reflections in select language and turned periods. With the aid of the latter, the eternal truths are preached; subjects easily understood are explained in a simple and familiar style, so that each one present may understand the entire instruction. In sermons, we address not only the learned, but also the uninstructed, and these, ordinarily, form the greater part of the audience. Hence, it is always expedient to preach in a simple, popular style; not only in the missions, and spiritual exercises, but also, in all sermons

addressed to the people. In the sight of God, the souls of the learned and unlearned are equally precious; and, according to the words of the Apostle, "*sapientibus et insipientibus debitor sum.*" (Rom. i, 14.) The preacher is obliged to seek the sanctification of the latter as well as of the former. Besides, even to the learned, sermons, composed in a simple and familiar style, are more profitable than discourses written in lofty and florid language. In sublime discourses, the mind pauses to admire and criticise, while the will is left without nourishment and derives no profit from the sermon. Father Segneri, the younger, by preaching in a popular manner, ravished (these are the words of Muratori) the hearts even of the learned. The same was the result of the sermons of St. Francis Regis. He who wishes to preach, not for the purpose of winning praise, but of gaining souls to God, should not be eager to hear the people say: "O what beautiful thoughts! What a splendid speaker! What an eloquent man!" But he should desire to see all leave the church with their heads bowed down, weeping over their sins, resolved to change their lives and to give themselves to God. The end of true eloquence is to persuade and to move the audience to practise virtue. Even in popular eloquence, preachers avail themselves of the arts of rhetoric, figures, clear and solid arguments, correct language, the peroration and so on. But all must be done simply and without show of art, in order to reap, not applause, but solid fruit. If, in such sermons, the audience are not delighted by elegant language, and ingenious reflections, they shall certainly be pleased to find themselves enlightened, and moved to attend to that which alone is important, their eternal salvation.

“All this, according to Muratori, is applicable to sermons preached in cities, where the audience consists of the ignorant and the learned ; but, he adds, that in addressing the common people, or the inhabitants of the villages, the preacher must adopt the most popular, the simplest kind of eloquence, in order to accommodate his instruction to the weak understanding of his hearers. The priest must imagine himself to be one of the audience, and that another is anxious to instruct him in some duty, and to persuade him to fulfil it. His language ought therefore to be popular and common, the periods short and abrupt. He should, in a word, imitate the very mode of reasoning which such persons usually adopt among themselves. In short, the whole study of the preacher should be to make the audience understand all he says, and to move his hearers most effectually to do what he exhorts them to practise. As the preacher should adopt a familiar style, so he should also select subjects easily understood. He should omit scholastic quibbles and far-fetched interpretations of Scripture, which though intelligible, will be unprofitable to the poor and illiterate. His great object should be to explain, plainly and forcibly, the eternal truths, the importance of salvation ; to lay before the people the illusions of the devil, the danger they are in of losing their souls, and the means they have to adopt in certain cases. This is the manner of breaking bread to the little ones, which the Lord demands of preachers, and of the general neglect of which he complains : ‘*Parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis.*’ (Thren. iv, 4.)

“In speaking to the uninstructed, it is also very useful to ask questions from time to time, and then to answer

them. It is useful to bring forward examples from the Lives of the Saints, or examples of punishments inflicted on sinners. But above all, it is important to inculcate practical things and to repeat them several times that they may remain impressed on the weak minds of the poor.

“Such is the doctrine of Muratori. From this it is evident that those orators who preach in a high and florid style to the poor, receive even from the learned censure rather than praise. In the Lives of the Saints who were employed in saving souls, I find many praised for preaching in simple and popular language; but I have not found one eulogized for having preached in a pompous and flowery style.”

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.—THE PRIEST
MUST NOT SEEK HIMSELF IN PREACHING THE
WORD OF GOD.—HE MUST STUDY HOLY
SCRIPTURE DILIGENTLY AND HAVE
THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

IV. *We must not seek ourselves in preaching the Word of God.*

In preaching we must not seek ourselves, but God's glory. Those who seek themselves are accustomed to speak in a high-flown style, unintelligible to the greater part of their audience. "Such priests," says Father Avila, "are traitors to Jesus Christ." Father Jasper Santius has justly said that such preachers are the greatest persecutors of the Church. By their sermons they are the cause of the ruin of many souls that would be saved by sermons composed in a simple and apostolic style. "My preaching," says the Apostle, "was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power." (I. Cor. ii, 4.)

A celebrated missionary denounced those preachers who aimed at sublimity, subtlety and pomposity; who, neglecting the souls of the poor, sought only their own praise and honor and who preached to please one or two distinguished persons in their audience.

On a certain occasion, after the delivery of a discourse, a learned man was observed to remain silent much longer than was usual for him on similar occasions, appar-

ently absorbed in thought, and hesitating whether to express his opinion of the performance or not. At length he was appealed to by some one, and asked whether he had any remarks to make. He rose and said, "I admire the sermon for the beauty of its style, for the splendor of its imagery, for the correctness of its sentiments, and for the point of its arguments; but, sir, it wanted *one* thing"—and then, pausing till the eyes of all were fixed upon him, he added—"it needed to be *baptized* in the name of the Blessed Trinity to entitle it to the name of an apostolic sermon."

"I do not admire," said a priest one day, "mighty fine preachers, who so beautifully round off all their sentences that they are sure to roll off the sinner's conscience."

"Prædicator qui sibi plausum quærit, non conversionem populi . . . damnabitur, tum quia prædicationes officio ad laudem, non Dei, sed suam, abusus est; tum quia vanam gloriam sibi finem ultimum præfixit: tum quia salutem tot animarum sibi creditam impedivit et evertit." (Cornel. à Lap.) "Odibilis plané Deo res est ex sermonibus sacris vulgarem famam appetere, Christoque neglecto, in affectibus mortalium se velle imprimere. Talis utique spiritualis adulter est, sui conditoris raptor gloriæ, et animæ suæ crudelissimus interemptor. (S. Laurent. Justin. De instit. et regim. Prætat. 7.)

St. Francis Xavier wrote to F. Baizée: "I hear on all sides praises bestowed on your preaching. I tremble lest pleasing everybody, you may cease to be displeased with yourself. Nothing in your ministry belongs to you except the faults which you commit. Remember that, if God blesses your discourse, it is a favor

granted, not to your merits, but to the prayers of the Church and to the piety of the people. Forget not that you will have to render to God a severe account of this gift of preaching that has been confided to you for the advantage of others. Compare the present fruit of your preaching with the much more abundant results you would have obtained, had your faults put no obstacle to the designs of God's mercy. Remember how many preachers, after having preached to others, have become reprobates because they were wanting in humility. They preached eloquently, admirably, and they have been cast into the fire of hell because they attributed to themselves the glory which was due to God alone."

V. *To preach well we must diligently study Holy Scripture.*

It is by the ministry of preaching that we fulfil the divine mission confided to us. "Docete omnes gentes." In fulfilling this mission we have to condemn and reject false teachings; we have to inveigh against vice and to encourage the practice of virtue; we have to trace out for every one his individual duties—for the learned and the ignorant, for the rich and the poor, for the just and sinners; we have to encourage the good, to exhort the weak, to convert the sinner, to narrate the sweet consolations of the just and to describe the fearful state of the impenitent sinner; we have to preach against false principles, impious books and writings and bad societies; in a word, we have to teach the people the science of God, his mysteries, his holy will. In doing all this we meet with much opposition. To overcome so much opposition something more powerful than human reasoning is required. It is self-deceit to believe that, by flowery discourses, we can destroy the ramparts of bad habits, the

deep counsels of inveterate malice, the heights of pride against the science of God. "*Consilia destruentes, et omnem altitudinem extollentem se adversus scientiam Dei.*" (II Cor. x, 4.) To overcome so much resistance we must use the most powerful arms—the word of God. "The word of God," says St. Paul, "is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv, 12.) The power of the word of God, as found in Holy Scripture, makes itself felt even by those who are strangers to religious ideas.

The word of God, says St. Paul, has four qualities. In it we find the sacred truths we have to teach. "*Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum.*" In the word of God we find powerful arguments for the refutation of errors contrary to these holy truths—"Utilis ad arguendum."

In the divine word we find the weapons whereby we successfully combat disorderly manners. "*Utilis ad corripiendum.*"

In the divine word we find all the paths of justice in which we have to direct the souls confided to our care. "*Utilis ad erudiendum in omni justitia.*" It is in studying the sacred Scriptures that we learn to speak that beautiful language of piety, zeal and unction; that we learn to speak with that eloquent pathos which strikes and melts the hearts of our hearers, carries conviction to their mind and compunction to their hearts. *There* we learn that apostolic science and eloquence which snatches souls from the tyranny of their passions and advances them

rapidly in virtue. Why is it that the instructions and sermons of the Fathers of the Church made so deep an impression upon their audience? It is because they taught the divine truths in the words of Holy Scripture, and illustrated them by the examples and comparisons of Holy Writ. It was by the word of God that they encouraged the good to practise virtue, persuaded sinners to leave their evil ways, and convinced heretics to embrace the true faith—the faith of the Catholic Church. St. Augustine, therefore, could say in truth that the success in preaching depends on the degree of science which the preacher has of Holy Scripture. “*Sapienter quis dicit tanto magis vel minus, quanto in Scripturis sanctis magis minusve profecit.*” Hence it is that the Church wishes us to draw from that source the salutary waters of heavenly doctrine to nourish souls and enable them to bear fruit for life everlasting. The Church seeks to inspire us with love for the sacred Scriptures from the very commencement of our ecclesiastical career. One of the first Orders the Church confers is that of lector, whose duty it is to read the sacred text to the faithful.

On receiving the last Order, among the graces which the Church implored for us, was “*ut in lege Domini die ac nocte meditantes, quod legerint, credant, et quod crediderint, doceant.*”

The Church recommends the study of Scripture most earnestly also in the assemblies of her Pontiffs. In speaking of priests the Council of Colôgne, in 1536, says: “*Nunquam a manibus eorum liber legis, hoc est, biblia, deponatur.*” “*Quotidie ex sacris bibliis legite; sacrarum litterarum studia diligenter colite.*” (Fourth Council of Milan.)

The Fathers of the Church and the interpreters of Holy Scripture say the same. “Necesse est, ut qui ad officium prædicationis excubant, a sacræ lectionis studio non recedant. (S. Greg. Part p, 2, c. 11.) “Vaca lectioni divinæ, in meditatione Scripturarum ; vaca in lege Dei ; habeto in divinis lectionibus frequentiam.” (S. Isid. Hisp. De contemptu sæc.) “Divinas Scripturas sæpius lege, imo nunquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio deponatur ; disce quod doceas. Sint divinæ Scripturæ semper in manibus tuis, et jugiter in mente volvantur. Tenenti codicem somnus obrepat, et cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat. (S. Hier in deversis epist.) Semper sis, quoad potes, in exercitio Scripturarum.” (Petr. Blos. De epist. c. 2.)

Let us therefore apply to ourselves what the angel of the Apocalypse said to St. John : “Accipe librum et devora illum,” or what the Lord said to his prophet : “Comede volumen istud, et vadens oquere ad filios Israel.” (Ezech. iii, 1.) By reading frequently the sacred books and meditating upon their holy doctrine, we shall become filled with that divine spirit which inspired them, and be able to communicate it to the faithful.

But if the substance of our sermons is not drawn from Holy Scripture, can we say with the prophets : “Os Domini locutum est.” “Hæc dicit Dominus ;” or with St. Paul : “In me loquitur Christus ?”

VI. *To preach well we must have the spirit of prayer.*

To save souls is to perform a supernatural work. We are charged to perform this work by our ministry of preaching. Our success in preaching is in proportion to the grace of the divine spirit that speaks through us.

One day a certain priest had to preach on a very solemn occasion. Wishing to make a deep impression

upon his hearers, he borrowed of a brother-priest a sermon which the latter had preached with great success. After a few days the borrower came back very much crestfallen and complained that the sermon, which he had delivered word for word, was a failure. "I lent you, indeed, my fiddle," was the answer, "but not my fiddle-stick." From this answer the borrower justly concluded that it was the manner of his brother-priest, not his matter, that produced so wholesome an effect upon his audience.

It is related of a certain old parish priest that, when he preached, the listeners were few, but that when his young assistant priest preached the Church was crowded. The old priest's sermons elicited no praises; the young priest's were loudly applauded; whereat the old priest became jealous and irritable. At length the young priest borrowed one of the old priest's sermons, and the following Sunday preached it from memory, with great emphasis and animation. The hearers were louder than ever in praise of the young priest, and one of the hearers remarked: "The old man never in his life preached a sermon equal to that!"

A discourse, therefore, delivered by one man, becomes an entirely different discourse when delivered from another's lips and charged with another's spirit.

Those who are wanting in lively faith, love for God and their neighbor, may preach, but their words are not flames, but icicles. They preach to the head, not to the heart. They may argue with logical precision, but they argue coldly. Who can wonder, when religious truth is enforced in this dry, argumentative, phlegmatic manner, that sermons are so destitute of living energy,

and fail to alarm the profligate, or to encourage the desponding?

"I go," said a certain gentleman, "to hear Father B., because his words come red-hot from the heart."

Nothing can be more true. To be eloquent, a man must be himself affected; he must be in earnest. In his own heart must burn the fire which he desires to kindle in the bosoms of others:

*"Si vis me flere dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi,"* says Horace.

To speak to the heart, we must speak from the heart. The means to touch it, is to be touched ourselves. What can come out of a cold heart but lifeless words? But if a priest is deeply penetrated with the truths which he announces, his voice, his gestures, his countenance, the unction of his words, will affect his hearers as he himself is affected. Nothing is so powerful as the words and gestures of a man who is visibly moved.

The triumphs of true eloquence, touching, grand, sublime, awful, are seen only when the orator stands before you in the simple majesty of truth, and, overpowered by the weight of his convictions, forgets himself and forgets everything but his momentous subject. You think not of who speaks, or how he speaks, but of what is spoken. A few pebbles from a brook, in the sling of a David, who knows how to send them to the mark, are more effective than a Goliath's spear and a Goliath's strength with a Goliath's clumsiness. The pathos is the nerve of Christian eloquence, and for the priest, the source of the pathos is prayer.

The apostles had received the command to preach the Gospel to all nations; and though they knew that preach-

ing was of the highest importance, nevertheless they looked upon prayer as even more important still. When they saw that their occupations became too numerous, and interfered with the sacred duty of prayer, they chose seven deacons to help them in their labors. "For," said they, "we must give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts xi, 4.) They say, expressly, we must give ourselves *first* to prayer, and *then* only to the preaching of the word of God ; for they knew very well that their preaching would be fruitless, unless it was accompanied by fervent prayer.

Hence St. Gregory says : "Prius aurem cordis aperiat voci Creatoris, et postmodum os sui corporis aperiat auribus plebis." (In Ezech. t. i, hom. 1.) St. Thomas teaches that all good preaching comes from a high degree of prayer. "Ex plenitudine contemplationis prædicatio derivatur." (2. 2. q. 188, act. 6.) Fervent prayers, says St Augustine, are more necessary to preach well than all the helps of the art of oratory. "Pietate magis orationum, quam oratorum facultate indiget."

Nowadays most of preachers have learning, but they are not sufficiently grounded in true sanctity and a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. Interior humility, purity of heart, recollection, and the spirit and assiduous practice of holy prayer are the principal preparation for the ministry of the word and the true means of acquiring the science of the saints. A short, devout meditation and fervent prayer, which kindle a fire in the affections, furnish more thoughts proper to move the hearts of the hearers and inspire them with sentiments of true virtue than many years employed merely in reading and study.

After John Tauler had shone in the pulpit for many

years, and won applause in Cologne and all Germany, he suddenly retreated to his cell, leaving the people astonished at his disappearance. The fact was, an unknown man accosted him after one of his discourses, and asked permission to speak his mind regarding him. Tauler having given this permission, the unknown man replied : " There lives in your heart a secret pride : you rely on your great learning and your title of doctor. In the study of letters you do not seek God or his glory with a pure intention, you seek only yourself in the passing applause of creatures. Therefore the wine of heavenly doctrine and the divine word, though pure and excellent in themselves, lose their strength when passing through your heart, and drop without savor or grace into the breast that loves God." (Tauler's life, by Darius, B. D.) Tauler was magnanimous enough to listen to these words ; and assuredly no one would have ventured so to address him, had he not deserved it. He kept silence. The vanity of his present life was apparent to him. Withdrawn from all commerce with the world, he abstained for two years from preaching or hearing confessions, night and day an assiduous attendant at every conventual exercise, and passing the remainder of his time in his cell, deploring his sins and studying Jesus Christ. After two years, Cologne learned that Doctor Tauler was to preach once more. The entire city repaired to the church, curious to penetrate the mystery of a retirement which had been variously explained ; but when he ascended the pulpit, after vain struggles to speak, tears were the only thing he could bring from his heart : he was now not merely an orator, he was a saint.

From that time he preached like a true apostle, tan-

quam potestatem habens, quia Dominus erat in corde suo et in labiis suis, ut digne et competenter annuntiaret Evangelium Christi.

The great apostle of Andalusia, the venerable John D'Avila, was one day asked to lay down some rules for the art of preaching. He said he knew no other art than the most ardent love of God and zeal for his honor. He used to say to young priests that one word spoken by a man of prayer does more good than all the most eloquent discourses; it is only the language of the heart that speaks to the heart, and a life of mortification and prayer not only draws down the dew of the divine blessing upon the labors of the preacher, but it replenishes his soul with a sincere spirit of humility, compunction and all virtues, and with an experimental knowledge and feeling sense of the great truths which he delivers. Zealous priests, filled with the spirit of God, are a great blessing to the people among whom they labor; and this reflection unfolds the secret how saints possess so extraordinary a grace of converting souls to God.

This was the excellent gift of St. Bernardine of Sienna. Those who heard him preach, felt their souls melt into sentiments of compunction, divine love, humility, and the contempt of the world; they returned home new men, striking their breasts and bathed in tears. The word of God was in his mouth as a fire, and as a hammer breaking the hardest rocks.

Another eminent preacher of his order was asked the reason why his sermons did not produce so much good as those of Bernardine. "Brother Bernardine," he answered, "is a fiery, glowing coal. What is only warm has not the power of kindling a fire in others like a burn-

ing coal." When the saint himself was asked the best way to preach with profit, he said: "In all your actions seek in the first place the Kingdom of God and his glory; direct all that you do purely to his honor; persevere in brotherly charity, and practise first all that you desire to teach others. By this means the Holy Ghost will be your master and will give you such wisdom and such a tongue that no adversary will be able to stand against you."

This he faithfully practised, and from his constant communication with God he imbibed that eminent spirit of virtue which gave him the most powerful ascendant over the hearts of men.

We read in the lives of St. Dominic, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis Regis, St. Alphonsus, St. Leonard of Port-Maurice, that these holy men, after having labored during the day for the salvation of souls, were wont, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, to spend the greater part of the night in prayer. St. Francis de Sales declared that the Masses and prayers which he offered up for the inhabitants of Chablais contributed more toward their conversion than all his learning. "The apostles," said he, "never preached the word of God without having first offered up most fervent prayers to heaven. He is greatly mistaken who expects to convert infidels, heretics, or other great sinners, by any other means than those which Jesus Christ and his Apostles employed: it is God alone who, by his grace, changes the hearts of men, and for this grace we can never pray too fervently."

"The labors of a priest who is not given to prayer," says St. Vincent de Paul, "will produce little or no good; whilst, on the contrary, a priest who is given to prayer

can easily move the hearts of his hearers, and convert even the most hardened sinners. Yes, give me a man of prayer, and all his efforts will be crowned with success. He will be able to say with St. Paul: 'I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me!' Prayer is the grand fountain-head from which he can derive true eloquence to inspire the hearts of the people with horror of sin and love of virtue." Indeed, the priest who diligently practises prayer may say with our Lord Jesus Christ: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." (Jôhn viii, 38.) He can also say with St. John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, . . . we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i, 1-3.)

The Curé of Ars is a most admirable example of this truth. When the people heard this saintly priest, who made no pretensions to learning, speak of heaven, of the sacred humanity of our Lord, of his sorrowful Passion, his Real Presence in the most holy Sacrament of the altar; when 'they heard him discourse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of her mercy and her greatness; when they heard him speak of the happiness of the saints, the purity of the angels, the beauty of a poor soul, the dignity of man—of all those subjects which were familiar to him; when the people, I say, heard this saintly priest speak of all these subjects, they generally came away from the discourse quite convinced that the good father had seen the things of which he spoke with such fulness of heart, with such lively emotions, and with such an abundance of tears. Indeed, his words then bore the

impress of divine tenderness ; they penetrated the heart with a warmth and an unction which were indescribable. There was so extraordinary a majesty, so marvellous a power, in his voice, in his gestures, and in his looks, that it was impossible to listen to him without being moved.

Views and sentiments which are imparted to the soul by God, produce an impression far different from those which are acquired by study. Doubt gave way, even in the most darkened mind, to the absolute certainty of faith. The words of the Curé of Ars were the more efficacious, because he preached from his inmost heart. His very appearance was a living proof of the truth of what he said. It could be truly said of him, that he was able to convince men even by his silence. When you saw that pale and emaciated face in the pulpit ; when you heard that shrill, piercing voice uttering such sublime thoughts, clothed in the most simple and popular language, you naturally fancied yourself in the presence of one of those great characters spoken of in the Bible. You already felt yourself filled with respect and confidence, and disposed not to criticise his words, but to profit by them.

To those to whom it was given to be present at his instructions, two things were equally remarkable—the preacher and the hearer. They were not the words that the preacher gave forth—it was more than words ; it was a soul, a holy soul, all filled with faith and love, that poured itself out before you, of which you felt in your own soul the immediate contact and the warmth. As for the hearer, he was no longer on the earth ; he was transported into those purer regions, from which dogmas and mysteries descend. As the saint spoke, new and clear views opened to the mind : heaven and

earth, the present and the future life, the things of time and eternity, appeared in a light that you had never before perceived.

When a man coming fresh from the world, and bringing with him worldly ideas, feelings, and impressions, sat down to listen to his doctrine, it stunned and amazed him—it set the world so utterly at defiance, and all that the world believes, loves, and extols. At first he was astonished and thunderstruck, then by degrees he was touched, and surprised into weeping like the rest.

No eloquence has drawn forth more tears, or penetrated deeper into the hearts of men. His words opened a way before them like flames, and the most hardened hearts melted like wax before the fire. They were burning, radiating, triumphant; they did more than charm the mind; they subdued the whole soul, and brought it back to God, not by the long and difficult way of argument, but by the paths of emotion, which lead shortly and directly to the desired end.

He was the oracle that people went to consult, that they might learn to know Jesus Christ. Not only the sinful, but the learned, not only the fervent, but the indifferent, found in it a divine unction which penetrated them, and made them long to hear it again. The oftener you heard him, the more you desired to go and hear him again and again. Nothing more clearly showed that the Curé of Ars was full of the spirit of God, who alone is greater than our heart. We may draw from his depths without ever exhausting them; and the divine satiety which he gives only excites a greater appetite.

He spoke without any other preparation than his continual union with God. He passed, without interval or

delay, from the confessional to the pulpit; and yet he showed an imperturbable confidence, which sprang from complete and absolute forgetfulness of himself. Besides, no one was tempted to criticise him. People generally criticise those who are not indifferent to their opinion of them. Those who heard the Curé of Ars had something else to do—they had to pass judgment on themselves.

This real power of his word supplied in him the want of talent and rhetoric. It gave a singular majesty and an irresistible authority to the most simple things that issued from those venerable lips. He loosed his words like arrows from the bow, and his whole soul seemed to fly with them. In these effusions, the pathetic, the profound, the sublime, were often side by side with the simple and ordinary. They had all the freedom and irregularity, but also all the originality and power, of an improvisation. Those who have sometimes tried to write down what they had just heard, found it impossible to recall the things which had most moved them, and to put them into form. What is most divine in the heart of man cannot be expressed in writing.

“Experience,” says St. Thomas of Villanova, “shows us every day that a priest of moderate learning, but full of the love of Jesus Christ, converts more souls than many learned orators, whose eloquent discourses are praised by every one.” St. Jerome used to say: “One single priest, inflamed with divine love, is able to convert a whole nation.” “One word,” says St. Alphonsus, “uttered by a priest inflamed with divine love, will produce more good than a hundred sermons composed by a learned divine who has but little love for God.” “I will always repeat,” says St. Francis de Sales, “that who-

ever preaches with love preaches sufficiently against heresy, although he may not utter a single word of controversy. During the thirty-three years that I have been in the ministry, I have always remarked that the practical sermons of a priest whose heart is filled with piety and zeal, are like so many burning coals heaped upon the heads of the enemies of our holy faith. Such sermons always edify and conciliate non-Catholics."

Now, it is not in the study of books, but in holy prayer and meditation, that the heart of the priest becomes enkindled with divine love and zeal for souls. "St. Philip Neri," says St. Alphonsus, "received far more light in the catacombs of Rome, where he spent whole nights in prayer, than in all the books which he studied; and St. Jerome acquired far greater wisdom by his meditations in the cave of Bethlehem, than by all his studies. It often happens that you learn more in one moment of prayer than in ten years' study. Now, the more ardently we love God, the greater will be our knowledge of him. It takes much time and labor to acquire profane sciences; but to acquire the science of the saints—the love of God—it suffices to will it earnestly, and to ask it perseveringly of God. The Wise Man says: 'Wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her. She anticipateth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself unto them. He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labor, for he finds her sitting at his door!' (Wisd. vi, 13–16.) This wisdom, or love of God, as St. James the Apostle assures us (chap. v, 1), must be sought for in prayer."

We shall not learn how to preach well before we have learned how to pray well.

CHAPTER V.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES' OPINIONS ABOUT PREACHING AND CONTROVERSY, AND HIS METHOD OF DEAL- ING WITH HERETICS.

(Taken from "*Spirit of St. Francis de Sales.*")

St. Francis de Sales' extraordinary success as a preacher makes every hint on this subject extremely valuable. Here, as in everything else, we find the same spirit of sweetness, simplicity, and sincerity. A few anecdotes will illustrate these characteristics. We will head them by an amusing incident related by the candid Bishop, who, in his admiration for the model before him, fell into the mistake of attempting to imitate the Saint's manner of speaking in the pulpit.

"I entertained so high an esteem of him, that all his ways enchanted me. I took it into my head to imitate his style of preaching. Do not imagine, however, that I aspired to imitate him in the height of his thoughts, in the profundity of his doctrine, in the power of his reasoning, in the soundness of his judgment, in the tenderness of his language, in the perfect order and connection which reigned in his sermons, and in that incomparable sweetness which could move the very rocks from their foundations. All that was beyond my reach. I was like one of those flies which, unable to

walk on the polished surface of a mirror, betake themselves to the frame. I amused myself, and, as you will hear, I deceived myself in striving to adopt his external action, his gestures, and pronounciation. In him all these were slow and quiet. As mine were naturally the reverse, I underwent so strange a metamorphosis, that no one would have known me. I was no longer myself. I had spoilt my own original to make a very bad copy of him whom I wished to imitate. Our Saint, who had been informed of all this, said to me one day, after making approaches to the subject for some time, ‘*Apropos* to sermons, I have heard a piece of news: I am told you have taken a fancy to mimic the Bishop of Geneva’s preaching.’ I defended myself by replying, ‘Well, and have I chosen so bad a pattern after all? Do you not think he preaches better than I do?’ ‘Ah! come,’ he rejoined, ‘here is a personal attack. Well, certainly, he does not preach ill; but the worst is, I am told that you imitate him so badly, that people can make nothing of it but a very imperfect attempt, which spoils the Bishop of Belly, without representing the Bishop of Geneva; so that it would be necessary to follow the example of that bad painter, who used to write the names of the persons whose portraits he had taken under the faces he had daubed.’ ‘Let him alone,’ I retorted, ‘and you will see that by degrees he will rise from the rank of apprentice to that of master; and that in the end his copies will pass for originals.’ ‘Joking apart,’ he replied, ‘you spoil yourself; you pull down a good building, to reconstruct another against all the rules of nature and art. Besides, at your age, supposing you have contracted a bad crease, like a piece of cloth, you

will not find it easy to get rid of it. O, if it were possible to exchange qualities, what would I not give for yours ! I do what I can to preach with a little more life ; but the more I labor, the slower I get on. I have a difficulty in finding words ; and still more in pronouncing them. I am heavier than an old stump of a tree. I can move neither myself nor others. I perspire, it is true, a great deal, but make very little headway. You go at full sail, I by dint of oars ; you fly, I crawl or creep along like a tortoise ; you have more fire in your fingers' end than I have in my whole body, you have a wonderful rapidity, you can fly like a bird ; and now I hear that you weigh your words, measure your periods, drag your wings ; that you droop and flag, and make your hearers do the same.' I can tell you that this dose was so effectual, that it freed me from this pleasant error, and sent me back to my old ways."

The Saint's love of holy simplicity and sincerity is displayed in several other charitable lessons which the good Bishop records as having received at his hands.

"One day I was to preach at the Visitation ; and knowing that our Saint would be present, and that a large concourse was expected, I must own that I felt a little anxiety on the occasion, and prepared myself in good earnest. When we had returned to his residence, and were alone together, 'Well,' he said, 'you have given general satisfaction to-day ; people went away exclaiming *mirabilia* at your fine and eloquent panegyric. I met with only one individual who was not satisfied.' 'What can I have said,' I replied, 'to shock this person ? for I have no desire to know his name.' 'But I, for my part,' he rejoined, 'have a great desire to tell it you.'

‘Who is he, then, that I may endeavor to give him satisfaction?’ ‘If I had not great confidence in you, I should not name him; but as I know you well, I willingly do so. Do you see him here?’ I looked round, and saw no one but himself. ‘It is you, then,’ I said. ‘Myself,’ he replied. ‘Certainly,’ I rejoined; ‘I should have valued your single approbation more than that of the whole congregation. Thank God, I have fallen into the hands of one who wounds only that he may heal! What, then, did you find fault with? for I know that your indulgence will not excuse anything in me.’ ‘I love you too much,’ he resumed, ‘to flatter you; and if you had loved our sisters after this fashion, you would not have amused yourself in puffing up their minds, instead of edifying them; in praising their state of life, instead of teaching them some humiliating and more salutary doctrine. It is with the food of the mind as with that of the body. Flattery is windy; and windy food, like vegetables, is un-nutritious. We ought in preaching to provide, not empty food, the memory of which perishes with its utterance, but meat which will endure to life everlasting. We must never, indeed, ascend the pulpit, without the special object of building up some corner or other of the walls of Jerusalem, by teaching the practice of some virtue, or the avoiding of some vice; for the whole fruit of preaching consists in eradicating sin, and planting justice. O Lord, exclaimed David, *I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted unto Thee.*’ (Psalm i, 15.) ‘What sort of conversion,’ I retorted, ‘could I preach to souls delivered from the hands of their enemies, the devil, the flesh, and the world, and serving God in holiness?’ ‘You ought to have taught them,’ he said, ‘that, as they

stand, they should take heed lest they fall. You should have taught them to work out their salvation, according to the council of the Holy Spirit, with fear and trembling ; and not to be without fear, even with respect to sins forgiven. You described them to us as so many saints. It costs nothing to canonize the living. You must not place pillows under peoples' elbows in this way, nor give milk to those who need bitter herbs and wormwood.' 'My object,' I said, 'was to encourage and fortify them in their holy undertaking.' 'We must encourage,' he replied, 'without tempting people to presumption and vanity. It is always safer to humble our hearers than to exalt them to high and admirable things above their reach. I feel persuaded that another time you will be more cautious in this respect.'

"The next day he made me preach at a convent of the nuns of St. Clare. He was present, and the congregation was not less numerous than on the preceding day. I took care to avoid the pitfall he had pointed out to me. My discourse was very simple, both in words and ideas, aiming at nothing except edification. I proceeded with much method, and pressed home my subject. Our saint, on our return, came to see me in my apartment, which, in fact, was his own ; for when I was on a visit to him, he always gave me his room. After tenderly embracing me, 'Truly,' he said, 'I loved you dearly yesterday, but much more to-day. You are, indeed, quite after my own heart ; and if I am not much mistaken, you are also according to God's heart, who, I believe, has been pleased with your sacrifice. I did not believe you would have been so yielding and condescending. It is a true saying, that *the obedient man shall speak of victory.* (Prov.

xxi, 28.) You have conquered yourself to-day. Do you know that most of your hearers said, "To-day is very unlike yesterday," and they were not as much pleased this time as the last; but the individual who was not satisfied yesterday is wonderfully pleased to-day. I grant you hereupon a plenary indulgence for all your past faults. You have fulfilled all my wishes to-day; and if you persevere, you will do much for the Lord of the vineyard. Preaching must not seek its strength in the words and the notions of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. If you faithfully adhere to this method, God will give to your labors a full and honorable increase; you will become prudent in the words of mystical wisdom, and will possess the science of the saints, the science that make saints. What, after all, do we desire to know, save Jesus, and Jesus crucified!

"When he heard people talk of preachers who did wonders, he would ask, 'How many has their preaching converted? The conversion of souls is a more miraculous work than the resurrection of the dead, since it is a passage from the death of sin to the life of grace.' If they answered him, that the wonders alluded to were eloquence, science, memory, striking manner, and other characteristics of a great speaker,—'These qualities,' he would say, 'are those of a worldly orator, and can be acquired by human diligence; but they appertain not to those on whom the Holy Spirit has poured the science of the language of heaven, which is the science of salvation, the science of the saints.'

"When any one said that a preacher was succeeding very well, he would ask in what virtues he excelled, whether in humility, in mortification, in sweetness, in

courage, in devotion, and such like. On being told that it was good preaching which was meant, 'That,' he would rejoin, 'is saying, not doing. The one is much easier than the other. How many there are who say, and do not—who pull down by their bad example what they have built up with their tongue! Is not that man a very monster, whose tongue is longer than his arm?' Some one observed of a preacher, 'He has done wonders to-day.' He replied, 'He who has done wonders is the man who is found without spot—who has not followed after gold, nor placed his hope in worldly treasure.' To another, who said of a certain preacher that he had even soared above himself, 'What interior self-sacrifice has he achieved?' was his reply; what insult has he endured? It is upon such occasions that we surmount ourselves. Would you know whence I infer the excellence and merit of a preacher? It is when those who come away strike their breasts, saying, *I will do well*; not, *How well he has done*! When the sermon is over, do not amuse yourself with attending to those vain popular plaudits. How well he has acquitted himself! What eloquent language! What profound knowledge! What an admirable memory! What a fascinating preacher! What a pleasure it is to listen to such a man! I never had such a treat in all my life!" All this is empty babble, proceeding from minds that lack judgment. Christian preachers, St. Jerome tells us, ought not to have recourse to the arts of the rhetorician, but should use the simple language of fishermen; that is, of the Apostles. If St. Paul condemns hearers with itching ears, how much more preachers who tickle them by their choice words, rounded periods, and studied com-

positions ! But if, on coming out from the sermon, you should meet with any who, like the centurion, say : “ Truly, this man is of God ; he preaches not himself, but Jesus Christ ; he teaches us to repent of our sins ; it will not be his fault if we do not turn from our evil ways ; this sermon will rise against us on the day of judgment, if we do not profit by it.” Or if they say : “ O, how necessary is penance for salvation ! How lovely is virtue ! How sweet is the burden of the cross ! How light is the yoke of God’s law ! How hideous and detestable is sin ! Let us die rather than sin.” Or if, without using so many words the hearers testify to the fruit of the preaching by the amendment of their lives, you may judge of the goodness and efficiency of the preacher ; you may be sure that he does not preach for his own glory, but for the glory of him that sent him,—for the glory of God, who speaks by his mouth, and fills him with his Spirit.’

“ In proof of this, he told me the following anecdote : ‘ A very celebrated preacher came to Annecy ; I begged him to preach ; he consented ; and setting off in a high style, he propounded his sublime notions in such pompous language, and with such a display of eloquence, that our good mountaineers were quite astonished. As they came out, nothing was to be heard but expressions of delight and admiration. Never was so much incense of praise offered to mortal man. They vied with one another in their applause, and in lauding him to the skies. Knowing well how much this discourse was above the comprehension of its admirers, I took some of them aside, and questioned them to find out how much they had retained of it, and what particular profit they had derived from it. Not one of them could tell me a word. One

more ingenious than the rest replied: "If I had understood it, and could retail it to you, it would only prove that he had said nothing uncommon. It is our ignorance which excites our admiration; for he talked of such high and lofty things, that they were quite beyond our reach; and this makes us have a greater esteem for the mysteries of our religion." ' St. Francis praised his candor, and acknowledged that he had derived some sort of profit from the sermon. Spring flowers are not enough, if they are not followed by autumn fruit. The preacher who has only the leaves of language and fine thoughts, is in peril of being classed among those unfruitful trees who are threatened in the Gospel with the axe and the fire. *I have chosen you*, said our Lord to his Apostles, *that you should go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.* " (John xv, 16.)

M. de Belley mentions, that in the early days of his episcopate, being yet, as he says, "very green" (having, by special dispensation of the Pope been consecrated under the age prescribed by the canons), and having his mind yet freshly stored with his school knowledge and with elegant literature, for which he had a particular turn, he brought forth a redundancy of such matter from the treasures of his memory. It was upon the occasion of his being invited, in 1610, to preach the Lenten sermons before the Senate of Savoy, in Chambery, the capital city of that province, that it was reported to our Saint, who was at his episcopal residence at Annecy, only seven leagues distant, that (to continue in the Bishop's own words) his "discourses were all flowers and perfume, which attracted crowds of hearers, like bees which cluster round sugar and honey. The Saint, however, who judged

after quite a different fashion, and who was well skilled in this art, desired to see me draw more from the divine Scriptures than from human letters. He preferred solid piety to a display of spiritual expressions eloquent with human wisdom. Whereupon he wrote me a beautiful letter, in which he apprised me, that the odor which my sweet spices exhaled had reached even to him, so that he compared himself to Alexander, who, sailing towards the Fortunate Islands, became aware of their neighborhood by the fragrance which the wind, sweeping over the smooth surface of the sea, wafted to his vessels. After having thus concealed the point of his lancet in this oiled and perfumed cotton, he stuck it in by telling me that, after so many messengers, who every day brought him word that our bed was all strewed with verdure, our furniture of cedar and cypress—that our blossoming vines were spreading their sweetness on all sides,—that our garden was full of nothing but flowers,—that it was laughing spring-time all around us,—he was expecting others to give him news of summer and autumn, of the harvest and the vintage. ‘I am listening,’ he said, ‘to hear *an flores fructus parturiant* ;’ telling me that, after all, he advised me to strip my vine of its superfluous tendrils of *belles-lettres*—*tempus putationis venit* ; to prune and retrench from it so many foreign ornaments ; and that, although it was allowed to use the vases of the Egyptians for the service of the tabernacle, it ought to be done with moderation ; that Rachel was indeed fairer than Lia, but that Lia was more fruitful ; that the Gospel ought to be expounded in conformity with its own style and simplicity ; that red and white paint ill became the face of theology ; and that we ought to beware of adulterating the Word of

God even more than the current coin ; to which he added many other similar instructions, which had the effect of making me much more reserved, much less liberal of those viands which are rather empty than solid, and much more careful to labor for that meat which perishes not, and which the Gospel so strongly recommends to us.

“It was his opinion, that it is not enough for the preacher to have a general intention of instructing in the ways of God, but that he should aim at some special object ; for instance, the knowledge of some mystery, the exposition of some article of faith, the destruction of some vice, or the establishment of some virtue. ‘You would hardly believe,’ he said, ‘how important is this advice, and how many labored and studied sermons are profitless for want of point. If you follow this maxim, your sermons will produce much fruit ; if you neglect it, you may reap admiration for yourself, but others will derive no benefit.’”

“He approved extremely of shortness in sermons, and said that lengthiness was the most general defect of the preachers of his day. ‘Do you call that a defect’, said I, ‘and thus give to plenty the name of scarcity?’ ‘When the vine,’ he replied, ‘produces a great deal of wood, then it is that it bears the least fruit. A multitude of words never produces a great effect. Observe all the homilies and sermons of the ancient fathers—how short they are ; but O how much more efficacious they were than ours ! The good St. Francis, in his rule, enjoins upon the preachers of his Order to be brief, and adduces this reason—that God had *made a short word upon the earth*. (Rom. ix, 28.) ‘Believe me,’ he said, ‘I speak from experience, and from very long experience ; the more you

say, the less will be remembered; the more you say, the less will your hearers profit. By dint of overloading their memory, you make it break down; as lamps are put out by too much oil, and plants are stifled by too much watering. When a sermon is too long, the end makes us forget the middle, and the middle the beginning. Preachers of very moderate powers are endurable, provided they are brief; while such as are excellent become burdensome when they are too long. A preacher cannot have a more offensive fault than lengthiness. You must say little, and say that well, and inculcate it diligently, not making the least account of those fastidious minds who are displeased when a preacher repeats a thing, and goes over the same ground again. What! is it not necessary in working iron to heat it over and over again; and in painting to touch and retouch repeatedly? How much more, then, is it needful in preaching to repeat the same thing, in order to imprint the eternal truths in hearts confirmed in evil, and on hardened intellects?"

Not only did St. Francis approve of short sermons, but he had a predilection for a limited audience, as M. de Belley thus relates:

“‘Rejoice,’ said our Saint, ‘when in ascending the pulpit you see few people, and that you have but a thinly-scattered audience.’ ‘But,’ said I, ‘it costs no more trouble to teach many than few.’ ‘It is from a thirty years’ experience in this matter,’ he replied, ‘that I speak. I have always seen greater results for God’s glory from sermons I have preached before small than before large congregations. At the time I was provost, I was sent by the bishop, my predecessor, to preach. One Sunday,

when the weather was very bad, there were only seven persons in the church, so that some one observed to me, that it was not worth while to give any sermon. I replied, that neither did a large audience encourage, nor a small one dishearten me ; that provided one single individual was edified, it was enough. I accordingly ascended the pulpit, and I remember my sermon was on prayer to the saints. I treated the subject very simply ; I said nothing either pathetic or vehement ; however, one of the congregation began to weep bitterly, and even to sob and sigh quite audibly. I thought he was ill, so I begged him not to put any constraint upon himself ; that I was about to finish, and would come and help him if he needed anything. He replied that he was quite well in body, and begged me to go on, saying that I was dressing the wound which required it. When the sermon, which was short, was over, he came and threw himself at my feet, exclaiming, ‘ M. le Provost, I owe my life to you ; you have saved my soul to-day. Blessed be the hour when I came here and heard you ! it has been worth an eternity to me.’ He then told me, that having been conferring with some (Protestant) ministers concerning prayer to the saints, which they represented as horrible idolatry, he had fixed the following Thursday for his abjuration of the Catholic religion ; but that he had been so well instructed by the sermon he had just heard, and his doubts had been so completely removed, that he detested the promise he had made, and vowed obedience anew to the Catholic Church. I cannot tell you what an impression this example, occurring amongst so small a number of people, produced through the whole neighborhood, and how docile and ready to receive the Word of God it rendered the hearts of others.’

“A very learned preacher, who took great pains with his sermons, but who was not much followed, often employed the best part of his discourse in complaining of the negligence of those who did not come to hear the Word of God, and even went so far as to threaten to give up preaching and forsake his pulpit. The Saint, who had been present, said to one of his confidential friends, as they came out of church, ‘With whom is this good man angry? He has scolded us for a fault we have not committed, for we were present. Would he have had us cut ourselves up into bits to fill the empty places? It is the absent he was displeased with, and they will not be the more punctual for his scolding, for they did not hear him. If he wished to address them, he ought to have gone about the streets and public places, to compel the people to come to his banquet. As it is, he inveighed against the innocent, and let the guilty alone.’

“Disputes on religious matters were very disagreeable to him, particularly at table, and after dinner. These were not, he said, bottle topics. I replied, one day, taking up his expression, that if a bottle of this kind was occasionally broken, it was only to give forth the lamp of truth, which is all fire and flame. ‘Yes, indeed,’ he rejoined, ‘fire and flames of anger and altercation, yield only smoke and blackness, and very little light.’ He also particularly disapproved of controversial subjects being introduced into sermons, as preaching was ordained to edify rather than to pull down; and was intended to instruct in morals, rather than to settle disputes concerning the faith which arise among such as are outside the Church. But it will be urged, perhaps, that it is for the purpose of confirming Catholics in their belief that the

arguments of their adversaries are overthrown in their presence. A plausible reason, but of which experience proves the futility ; because, not to speak of the thorny difficulties with which these disagreeable disputes are beset, the human mind, owing to its natural corruption, has so great a propensity to evil, that it will fix its attention on the objection rather than on its solution, and choose the serpent in place of the bread. His method, both in preaching and in private conferences with Protestants, was to expound with clearness and facility the simple and naked truths of faith. Truth, he said, in its native simplicity, has charms and attractions capable of winning the most rebellious souls. This plan he found to succeed so admirably, that, provided he could get a Protestant to give him a calm and quiet hearing, he not only made his weapons fall from his hands by thus disposing of his objections beforehand, but if he did not gain him over at once, he made so deep an impression on him that he was sure to return very soon to seek a healing remedy from the hand which had inflicted so happy a wound.

“ The example of this great Saint is the more apposite as it will be remembered he was called to rule a flock surrounded and intermingled with heretics. His advice, therefore, on this head may be safely followed by all. This great Saint considered that this method had four notable advantages : 1, it hides the point of the lancet in cotton ; 2, it avoids the weariness and importunity which generally accompany the thorny path of controversy ; 3, it takes its hearers happily by surprise, and makes them receive the truth, not only without difficulty but with pleasure ; 4, simple as it is, it possesses in its sim-

plicity a wonderful energy, changing offensive into defensive weapons, and drawing proofs for the defence of truth from the very objections of those who are in error."

M. de Belley goes on to exemplify the manner in which the Saint practised this method.

"As the answers which Catholics are in the habit of giving to the objections of Protestants are conformable to the truths taught by the Church, we have only to bring forward the solution first. As soon as we have clearly explained this solution without making it appear as an answer to an objection, the passage of Scripture upon which the objection is grounded, serves to prove the doctrine of the Church. Here is an example which will make the matter clear :

"Protestants commonly quote this passage of Scripture against the Real Presence : '*It is the spirit which giveth life : the flesh profiteth nothing ;*' to which we make two replies,—the one from St. Chrysostom, the other from St. Augustine : first, that the flesh without the spirit—that is, without the Divinity—profits nothing ; secondly, that the carnal and gross way in which the Capharnaïtes understood Our Lord profits nothing. To prove this we have only to point out the weakness of human flesh when left to itself, and to show that it is the Divinity which imparts to the humanity the power it possesses of communicating to the faithful who are its members that grace which itself has received by virtue of the hypostatic union. It is the Divinity of Christ inseparably united to his sacred Body, that vivifies souls who receive him in holy communion. According to the second interpretation, we have only to represent how gross and unworthy of this sublime mystery was the notion of the Capharna-

ites, and how far removed from it is the doctrine of the Catholic Church. We thus use the objection of Protestants to prove the Catholic doctrine. The Saint told me that he had for a long time employed this method, and that it so completely hid all appearances of controversy that, although one might preach nothing but controversial sermons, the hearers would scarcely be aware of the fact unless it were pointed out to them. He preached the Advent and Lent sermons at Grenoble, where there are numbers of Protestants; and these were more diligent in their attendance on his preaching than on that of their own ministers, because, they said, he was free from the spirit of contention. Yet he always employed the first part of his discourse in setting forth the truths of Catholic doctrine, but in the manner I have described, the latter part being devoted to the moral and devotional application. The Protestants, meanwhile, who never perceived the art of his method, wondered much at seeing him establish the faith of the Catholic Church by the very same Scripture texts by which they supported their principal objections.

“Our Saint one day, while at Paris, preached a sermon on the last judgment, to which God gave so much power and efficacy, that some Protestants who had come to hear him from curiosity were so deeply moved, that they conceived a desire to confer with him on some points of faith. The result was their complete satisfaction, and the conversion of an entire family of much note, who were received into the bosom of the Catholic Church.

“Here is the Saint’s own account of the fact: ‘Being at Paris, and preaching in the queen’s chapel upon the

terrors of the last day (it was not a controversial sermon), it happened that Madame de Perdreauville was present, having come from curiosity. She was caught in the snare, and in consequence of that sermon resolved to seek instruction. Three weeks later she brought her whole family to me to confession, and stood godmother to them all at confirmation. See how this sermon, which was not aimed at heresy, was endued with such power against it. God at that time vouchsafed this grace to my words in favor of these souls.

“ ‘ I have always said ever since that whoever preaches with love, preaches sufficiently against heresy, although he may not utter a single word of controversy. For these thirty-three years that God has called me to the sacred office of breaking the bread of his Word to the people, I have noticed that practical sermons, where the subject is treated with devotion and zeal, are so many burning coals heaped upon the heads of the Protestants who hear them. I have found that Protestants are always pleased and edified by these practical sermons, and are thereby rendered more docile and reasonable when we come to confer with them on disputed points. This is not my opinion alone, but that of the most celebrated preachers whom I have known. In fact, every one admits that the pulpit ought not to be made the battle-ground of controversy, and that we demolish more than we build up, if we attempt anything beyond a passing allusion to it.’ ”

If the opinion of a Saint on this point is worthy of notice, how much more the opinion of one who gathered into the Church's bosom so many lost sheep !

“ Our Saint,” says M. de Belley, “ received from heaven

a special grace for converting sinners, and for bringing outsiders to the bosom of that Mother, without whom we cannot have God for our Father. Not to speak of the restoration of Chablais to the Church, in which he co-operated in the conversion of from forty to fifty thousand souls, he was besides personally instrumental in reclaiming some fifteen or sixteen thousand persons from Protestantism. This special gift for converting heretics was the occasion of an observation which the great Cardinal du Perron, of literary celebrity, made one day ;—‘that if it was a question merely of *confounding* heretics, he thought he possessed the secret ; but to *convert* them, they must be sent to the Bishop of Geneva, who had a commission from heaven for that work.’ The Cardinal de Berulle was of the same opinion, and openly declared that the hand of God was with the blessed Francis.”

We are not to suppose, however, that St. Francis shrank from controversy where the honor of religion and the good of souls required that the truth should be publicly vindicated. Here is an instance recorded by M. de Belley, which exemplifies his holy boldness, and at the same time manifests its source,—a perfect confidence in God, whose glory alone he sought, and a spirit of humble self-renunciation :

The Saint, when preaching the Lent and Advent sermons at Grenoble, drew such crowded congregations, not only of Catholics, but also of Calvinists, that the sermons of their own ministers were left unattended. One of these men, a turbulent spirit, seeing his pulpit deserted, after indulging in many invectives and insulting declamations against the Saint, challenged him to a public conference. The challenge was accepted. A

person of merit, who did not think it advisable that the Saint should expose himself to this contest, represented to him the insolent temper of this minister, who had a hellish mouth, and the most vituperative and abusive of tongues. ‘Good,’ said the Saint; ‘this is just what we want.’ And as his friend went on to represent to him that he would receive the most unworthy treatment from this man, who would show him no more consideration than if he was the lowest of the people. ‘Better still,’ replied the holy Bishop; ‘this is what I seek. What glory shall accrue to God from my confusion!’ ‘But,’ rejoined the other, ‘would you expose the rank you hold to ignominy?’ ‘Our Lord,’ answered the Saint, ‘suffered far greater insults. Was he not satiated with opprobrium?’ ‘O,’ replied his friend, ‘you are aiming too high.’ ‘Well,’ continued the Saint, ‘I hope that God will give me the grace to endure more insults than this man can offer me; and if we are deeply humbled, God will be gloriously exalted. You will see crowds of conversions,—a thousand falling on the left hand and ten thousand on the right. It is God’s way to draw his honor from our humiliation. Did not the Apostles come forth joyfully from those assemblies where they had endured affronts for the name of Jesus? Let us take courage, and God will help us. Those who hope in him want for nothing, and are never confounded.’

“The enemy, however, who feared that this might prove a losing game, suggested so many prudential considerations to the minister’s adherents, who mistrusted his powers, that they got the king’s lieutenant, who at that time still belonged to their sect, to prevent the conference from taking place.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRIEST IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

The motives which should induce the priest to be zealous in instructing the children in the Christian doctrine, are : first, the great interest which Jesus Christ takes in children ; second, the more abundant fruits reaped from the care bestowed upon the young, and the great merit which is derived from giving religious instruction.

In the first year of the public life of Jesus there came to him a man named Jairus. He was the chief of the synagogue of Capharnaum. Jairus cast himself as a suppliant at the feet of our dear Saviour. He is a father. His daughter is dying, and she is a child of only twelve years of age.

Whilst Jesus and his disciples were going to Jairus' house they learned that the child had just died. The sounds of funeral music already issued from the house, and they hurriedly informed Jesus, the divine Physician, that he need come no further, as it was too late. But the hour of hopelessness is the hour of God. We therefore behold him approach the bed of the innocent victim. On one side are the weeping parents of the young girl, on the other Jesus Christ and three of his Apostles. All the powers of heaven, all the tenderness of earth bend over the child. Jesus takes the hand of the deceased and says : " Young girl, arise ! " She rises, she walks, she eats. The Lord has restored her to her father. From this miracle the Apostles understood how much Jesus loves children, and how much they should also love them.

The Church loves children. It is by them that the Apostolate begins, that its grace penetrates. Antiquity pretended to cherish them and under that old pagan reign of nature and of art what they saw in them was their graceful appearance, the purity of their look, the attractiveness of their innocence, their guileless ways and manners—all those early charms which are peculiar to childhood and pass away with their bloom. But what man, what age, what literature thought it possible to experience a sacred and deep sentiment for that crowd of wretched beings who were for society at most a hope, for some only a toy, and for many even a prey? Jesus was the first Master of a new and holy love. Allowing children to approach him, he not only embraced them, he blessed them, he consecrated them for time and eternity. *Tantum est enim regnum cœlorum*. They were sovereigns. He declared that his angels had the mission of being their representatives before God in heaven. He had just introduced the Christian Apostolate beside them on the earth, in order that it might cure them, that it might resuscitate them, that it might cause them to rise up, like the daughter of Jairus, that it might give them to eat at a divine table, that it might restore them to their parents in grace and in life, and that, by that miracle daily renewed, they should recognize a Saviour and should adore a God.

It was to children that he gave the special honor of being the first to shed their blood for his name's sake. He has held them up to us as a model of humility, which we should imitate: "Unless you become like little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." He wishes that every one should hold them in great honor: "See that you despise not one of these little ones." Why

not? "For I say to you, that their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. xviii, 10.)

He wishes every one to be on his guard, lest he should scandalize a little child: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. xviii, 6.) He says the love, attention, and respect paid to a child, is paid to himself: "And Jesus took a child, and said to them: Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me." (Luke. ix, 48.)

He rebuked those who tried to prevent little children from being presented to him that he might bless them: "And they brought to him young children, that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked those who brought them; whom, when Jesus saw, he was much displeased, and saith to them: Suffer the little ones to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a *little child*, shall not enter into it. And embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them." (Matt. x, 13-16.)

The Son of God came into the world to redeem all who were lost. But do children profit by his abundant redemption? Do they draw from the source of graces that are open to all? Will they be marked with the seal of divine adoption, and be nourished with his own flesh, in the sacrament of his love? Will they be counted, in the course of their career, among the number of his faithful disciples, or among the enemies of his law? Will they one day be admitted into his kingdom? Will they be excluded? Is heaven or hell to be their lot for all

eternity? The fate of children is in the hands of their natural guardians, and of those set over them. If the zeal of those to whom their training and education are confided be not active for their salvation, Jesus will lose in them the fruit of his sufferings and death. How many are deprived forever of the knowledge, sight, and possession of God, because they have not received right religious instruction! And who is answerable to God and humanity for the loss of those souls, unless those whose plain duty it was to impart such instruction?

If the first years of life are pure, they often sanctify the whole after-life; but if the roots of the tree are rotten and dead, the branches will not be more healthy. Man will become, in his old age, what religious education made him in his youth: "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii, 6.) All is a snare and seduction for youth. If the fear of God, the horror of evil, the maxims of religion, are not profoundly engraven in the soul, what is to protect young people from their passions? What can be expected of a young man who has but seldom heard of the happiness of virtue, the hopes of the future life, and the blessings or the woes of eternity? Can we, knowing, as we do, how much Jesus Christ loves children, resign ourselves to leaving them in their misery?

"The kings of the earth have their favorites," said St. Augustine. The favorites of Jesus Christ are innocent souls. What is more innocent than the heart of a child whom baptism has purified from original stain, and who has not as yet contracted the stain of actual sin? This heart is the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost. Who can tell with what delight he makes of it his abode? "My delights are to

be with the children of men." Look at the mothers who penetrated the crowd that surrounded the Saviour, in order to beg him to bless their children. They are at first repulsed; but soon after, what is their joy when they hear the good Master approve their desires, and justify what a zeal, little enlightened, taxed with indiscretion! Ah! let us understand the desires of the Son of God. "Suffer," says he to us,—"suffer little children to come to me." What! You banish those who are dearest to me? They who resemble them belong to the kingdom of heaven. If you love me, take care of my sheep, but neglect not my lambs. "Feed my lambs." "Despise not one of my little ones." "See that ye condemn not one of these little ones." (Matt. xviii, 10.) I regard, as done to myself, all that is done to them. O Saviour of the world! the desire to be beloved by thee, and to prove my love for thee, urges me to devote myself to the thorough instruction of children.

How great and consoling are not the fruits of zeal, when it has youth for its object! What difficulties do we not encounter, when we undertake to bring back to God persons advanced in age! Children, on the contrary, oppose but one obstacle to our zeal,—levity. All we need with them is patience. Their souls are like new earth, which waits only culture to produce four-fold. They are flexible plants, which take the form and direction given to them. Their hearts, pure as they are from criminal affections, are susceptible of happy impressions and tendencies. They believe in authority. A religious instinct leads them to the priest and the good teacher. They adopt with confidence the faith and the sentiments of those who instruct them. Oh, how easy to soften that

age, in speaking of a God who has made himself a child, and who died for us—to awaken the fear of the Lord, compassion for those who suffer, gratitude, divine love, in souls predisposed, by the grace of baptism, to all the Christian virtues ! Ask the most zealous pastors, and all will tell you that no part of their ministry is more consoling than that which is exercised for youth, because the fruits are incomparably more abundant. Although all our efforts for the sanctification of an old man, ever unfaithful to his duties, should be crowned with success, they could not help his long life being frightfully void of merits, and a permanent revolt against heaven. But, if there be a child in question, our zeal sanctifies his whole life ; we deposit in his soul the germ of all the good that he will do, and we shall participate in all the good works with which his career will be filled. All believers have come out of one single Abraham. From one child well brought up a whole generation of true Christians may proceed. In the little flock that surrounds any one of us, God sees, perhaps, elect souls,—pious instructors, holy priests, who will carry far the knowledge of his name, and aid him in saving millions of souls. Into what astonishment would the first catechists of a St. Vincent de Paul, of a St. Francis Xavier, be thrown, had they been told what would become of those children, and what they would one day accomplish ! But even supposing that all those confided to us follow the common way, we have in them the surest means of renewing parishes. To-day they receive the movement, in fifteen years they will give it. They will transmit good principles, happy inclinations to their own children, who will transmit them in their turn. It is thus that holy traditions are established, and a chain of solid

virtues perpetuated : ages will reap what we have sown in a few years.

In many a parish, faith may be so weakened, if not extinguished ; morality so disordered, if not utterly ruined and corrupted, that the only hope of spiritual regeneration lies in the children of the parish-school, who, as yet too young to know sin, may with good training make virtue their choice, and at a later period dethrone the threatening spirit of impiety.

Hence the Roman Catechism remarks that, “ However depraved a population may be, even so as to reject the final remedy of a mission, we may always get hold of the future generation as long as we have the children to work upon.” Under such circumstances attention to the children is the only means of the revival of religion.

A priest in Madagascar wrote to the *Annals of Faith* : “ The regeneration of this people is to be effected only by exercising an influence over their children.” Cardinal Wiseman says, “ The care of the children is now the great work which occupies the Church.” Cardinal Manning says, “ The fight of our age is about Who shall have the children, God or the devil ? ”

The pastor of such a congregation should be convinced of this truth. He should look upon the young generation as the chosen portion of his parish and use every effort to give them a thorough Christian education by every means in his power, especially by regular and careful teaching of the Catechism.

Rev. Father Flaget came to St. Vincennes in 1792, and found the congregation in a miserable condition. Out of nearly 700 souls of whom it was composed the missionary was able, with all his zealous efforts, to induce only

twelve to receive holy Communion during the Christmas festivities. His heart was filled with anguish at the spiritual desolation which brooded over the place. Yet he trusted in God, and yielded not for a moment to discouragement. He determined to enter at once upon the work of reformation, in the same way that St. Francis Xavier had adopted among the degenerate Portuguese at Goa—by seeking to reach the hearts of the parents through those of the children. He accordingly opened a school for the latter, in which they were taught, along with the rudiments of learning, the principles of the catechism and the prayers of the Church. He also formed a class of singing, and those of the children who had the best voices were exercised in singing French canticles. His success was complete. The children became warmly devoted to their new teacher; they entered with relish into all his plans; they were seen hanging around him as a father whom they loved. They sang the canticles, not only in the school and in the Church, but also while laboring in the fields. Some of the more pious and promising among them were also instructed to serve Mass; and the service of the altar was rendered imposing by a number of these pious youths, arrayed in white, within the sanctuary. The hearts of the parents were moved at the spectacle. The most obdurate among them determined not to be outdone by their own children. They came to confession in great numbers; and the congregation soon presented a new appearance. The pious pastor was consoled by the reflection that, if but twelve adults could be found at Vincennes who were willing to receive holy Communion on his first arrival, he could say, with truth—as St. Gregory Thaumaturgus had

said, under similar circumstances, of his episcopal city of Neo-Cæsarea—that at his departure there was probably not more than that number of persons who were not pious communicants.

It is by these considerations that the greatest saints and the finest geniuses of Christianity became so much attached to the religious instruction of youth. St. Jerome, St. Gregory, St. Augustine, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Joseph Calasanctius, Gerson, Bellarmin, Bossuet, Fenelon, M. Olier, etc., believed they could never better employ their time and talents, than in consecrating them to the religious instruction of the young. “It is considered honorable and useful to educate the son of a monarch, presumptive heir to his crown. . . . But the child that I form to virtue,—is he not the child of God, inheritor of the kingdom of heaven?” (Gerson.) Have we always comprehended all the good that we can do to children by our humble functions?

There is, indeed, nothing more honorable, nothing more meritorious, nothing which conducts to higher perfection, than to instruct men, especially children, in their religious duties. This instruction is a royal, apostolic, angelic, and divine function. *Royal*, because the office of a king is to protect his people from danger. *Apostolic*, because the Lord commissioned apostles to instruct the nations, and, as St. Jerome says, thus made them the saviours of men. *Angelic*, because the angelical spirits in heaven enlighten, purify, and perfect one another according to their ranks, and their earthly mission is to labor without ceasing for the salvation of man. St. Peter Chrysologus calls those who instruct others in the

way of salvation, "the substitutes of angels." Indeed their mission is divine; they carry on the very work of God himself. Everything that Almighty God has done from the creation of the world, and which he will continue to do to the end, has been, and will be, for the salvation of mankind. For this he sent his Son from heaven, who enlightened the world by his doctrine, and who still continues to instruct his people by his chosen disciples. Those, then, who direct children in the paths of heaven, who allure them from vice, who form them to virtue, may fitly be termed apostles, angels, and saviours. Oh! what glory awaits those who perform the office of angels, and even of God himself, in laboring for the salvation of the souls of children! If this employment is honorable, it is also not less meritorious. What is the religious instruction of children but conferring on a class of our race, the weakest and most helpless, with inconceivable labor and fatigue, the greatest of all blessings? For, while the physical development of the child advances with age, it is not so with the mental. Religious instruction alone can develop the noble faculties of the soul. The soul of a child would, so to speak, continue to live enshrouded in pagan darkness, if the teacher did not impart and infuse the light of truth. All the gold in the world is but dross in comparison with true religious knowledge.

Our Saviour says: "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, even a cup of cold water, shall not lose his reward." (Matt. x, 42.) May we not infer that those who bestow upon children the treasures of divine knowledge will receive an exceedingly great reward? If God denounces so severely those who scandalize little

children, "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea," (Matt. xviii, 6), what recompense will those receive who instruct and sanctify them ?

Those who give their efforts and means to this object, choose the surest way to appease the anger of God, and to insure their own salvation. They choose the best means of attaining a high degree of perfection. Almighty God gives to each one the graces proper to his vocation. Those, therefore, who are devoted to the religious instruction of children, must rest assured that God will give them extraordinary graces to arrive at perfection. "Whoever," says our Lord, "shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." (Matt. xviii, 5.) Whosoever, then, believes that our Saviour will not allow himself to be surpassed in liberality, must also believe that he will bestow his choicest blessings on those who instruct children in the knowledge of God and the love of virtue.

What obligations have not the "angels" of children, "who always see the face of the Father who is in heaven," (Matt. xviii, 10), to pray for these teachers, their dear colleagues and charitable substitutes, who perform their office, and hold their place on earth ! "Believe me," said St. Francis de Sales, "the angels of little children love with a special love all those who bring them up in the fear of God, and who plant in their tender souls holy devotion." The children will pray for their teachers, and God can refuse nothing to the prayers of children ; their supplications will ascend with the prayers of the angels.

What a shame for us to know that the devil, in alliance with the wicked, is at work, day and night, for the ruin and destruction of youth, and to be so little concerned about their eternal loss; just as if what the holy fathers say was not true, that the salvation of one soul is worth more than the whole visible world! When has the price of the souls of little children been lessened? Ah! as long as the price of the blood of Jesus Christ remains of an infinite value, so long the price of souls will remain of an incomprehensible value! Heaven and earth will pass away, but this truth will not. The devil knows and understands it but too well. He delights in us if we are hirelings, because we have no care for the sheep, and see the wolf coming, and leave the sheep and fly. (John x, 12.)

We hear a little child weeping, and we at once try to console it; we hear a little dog whining at the door, and we open it; a poor beggar asks for a piece of bread, and we give it; and we hear the mother of our Catholic children, the Catholic Church, cry in lamentable accents, "Let my little ones have the bread of life,—a thorough religious instruction," and shall we not heed her voice? We hear Jesus Christ cry, "Suffer the little ones to come unto me," by means of solid instruction; we see him weep over Jerusalem, over the loss of so many Catholic children, and we hear him say, "Weep not over me, but for *your children*;" and shall neither his voice nor his tears make any impression? Shall we say with the man in the Gospel: "Trouble me not, the door (of our heart) is now shut: I cannot rise and give thee"? (Luke xi.) If an ass, says our Lord, fall into a pit, you will pull him out, even on the Sabbath-day; and an innocent soul, nay, thousands of innocent children, fall away from

me, and pass over to the army of the apostate angels, and become my and your adversaries—and will you not care? What cruelty, what hardness of heart, what great impiety! Truly the curses and maledictions of all those who led a bad life, and were damned for want of Christian instruction, which we neglected to give them, will fall upon us! What shall we answer? “And he was silent.”* (Matt. xxii.)

To teach children with success, the priest must endeavor to gain their affection, and he will easily gain their affection, if they see that he loves them as a father. Hence, as our Lord delighted in having little children around, so should the good priest. How beautiful and consoling it is to see the children smile with joy whenever they see the priest! How sad, on the contrary, to see the children afraid of the priest!

A certain clergyman once complained to a friend that he could do nothing with the children; they were so rude, unmannerly, disobedient. One day this clergyman and his friend took a walk together. There was a group of children playing in the neighborhood. The moment they saw their pastor they took to their heels at once as if they had seen “auld reekie” himself. “See those

* Pope Paul V. in order more diligently to encourage the faithful to teach and to learn Christian Doctrine, granted the following indulgences:

1. The Indulgence of one hundred days to all teachers, fathers and mothers, every time they instruct the children and domestics in the Christian Doctrine.

2. The Indulgence of one hundred days to all the faithful, every time they employ themselves for half an hour in teaching or learning the Christian Doctrine.

To these Indulgences was added by Clement XII:

3. The Plenary Indulgence, after confession and communion, on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, on Easter Sunday, and on the Feasts of the holy Apostles, SS. Peter and Paul, to those who have the pious custom of assisting at, or teaching, the Christian Doctrine.

young rascals," said the splenetic pastor. "Wait till I get hold of them in school to-morrow. I'll make them behave!" Whether he gained the children's affection by whipping them or not, history does not state.

When teaching children the priest should try especially to be good natured and cheerful. He should endeavor, for the moment, to forget his many cares and grievances. "When I have any trouble with my parishioners," said a good priest, "I go to the children in school. Among them I feel happy again. I begin to breathe freely once more."

It is not prudent, however, to show more partiality for the children of the rich than for those of the poor; to show more interest in the girls than in the boys.

One day a certain clergyman entered the school with a package of candies, etc. "These candies," he said, "are for the good children, but the boys shall not get any. I'll give everything to the good girls." One can imagine that the boys were not quite pleased with this partiality for the weaker sex, especially as there were some very good boys in the school.

In order that his catechetical instructions may be easily understood, really useful and interesting, the priest must prepare every point before hand. Explanations, illustrations, parables, anecdotes, examples, questions, all should be ready. He should speak but little. He must make the children do the greater part of the talking. Most of the catechists are great talkers; but this is a great fault.

The language of the priest must be plain and simple. He must use variety in his expressions when he is asking the meaning, but not until he has exacted the pre-

cise words of the catechism. All that he says should bear upon the text of the catechism. He should ask one child, then another, and give none of them a chance of complaining that he has been forgotten.

Little presents induce children to come, and places of honor in class excite their emulation, and stories keep up their attention.

The priest should but seldom reprehend children, and then in a mild manner. Let him be content with words, and never use the rod.

“ If a word chastises, cast the rod away,
If a look suffices, have no word to say.”

Never show the least contempt for any of them. After a reproof, be reconciled at once and fully to the young offender.

At least twice a year, the priest should hear the confessions of all the children who have come to the use of reason. He should spare neither time nor trouble in preparing them for absolution.

It would be well to have every year the solemn blessing of infants and the dedication of them to Our Lady, and then profit by this opportunity to give wholesome advice to mothers.

It is not enough that the children learn the catechism by heart, and that they learn to say a few prayers ; they must be taught also to defend their faith ; they must be prepared for the many snares and temptations that may beset them in the future.

Here I cannot help making a remark in regard to those children who, in this country, learn the catechism in a foreign language. Most of these children, after leaving school, have to live among English-speaking people, many of

whom are Protestants, infidels and apostate Catholics. They are depending on them for a living ; they have to transact business with them, and often hear our holy religion maliciously attacked and ridiculed. Not having learned their Catechism in English, they are not able to defend the truths of their religion in English. They blush at their ignorance and are looked upon as block-heads, and reproached for not having learned anything in Catholic schools.

It is, therefore, the opinion of many good Prelates and priests of this country, that, at least in the highest class of parish-schools, children of foreign parentage should learn the Catechism not only in the language of their parents, but also in that of the country.

Not long ago, a zealous Bishop of this country told me that, in visiting his diocese, he came to a place where most of the Catholic young men had abandoned the practice of religion. On asking some of them why they had left the Church, they answered : “We have to live among Protestants and infidels. They ridicule us and our religion, and as we learned our religion in a foreign language we are not able to defend it, and we are ashamed of ourselves.

“Moreover, after leaving school we seldom had an occasion to speak the language in which we learned the catechism and our prayers. We have forgotten that language as well as the catechism and our prayers. Hence it is that an instruction given in that language makes no impression upon us. We are not able to confess our sins either in that language or in English. Hence it is that we became careless and indifferent in the practice of religion.”

Thereupon the Bishop notified all the Catholic young men of the place to meet regularly in the school-room every night after supper, and appointed a good priest to teach them their religion in English. Those young men were very thankful for the kindness of their Bishop. They regularly attended the instructions, and became from that time the pride of the parish and the prop and defenders of their religion.

CHAPTER VII.

NECESSITY OF HAVING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

We have seen the necessity of instructing the little ones, and the abundant fruits and merits derived from such instructions. But if we wish for the end, we must also wish for the means,—for Catholic schools. They are the nurseries of the Church, as novitiates are the nurseries of religious orders. Christian education is begun in the family, and is generally completed in Christian schools. Education in the family is the foundation of school education. The Christian school is but an auxiliary, though a most important one, especially to society as at present constituted.

“The school,” says Cardinal Manning, “is the place and provision made for the training of those who are baptized into the Christian faith. They have been made children of God, and as such they have a right of inheritance to four things, belonging to them by a right of inheritance to which all other rights are secondary.

‘They have a right to the knowledge of their faith; to the training of their conscience by the knowledge of God’s commandments; to the Sacraments of grace; and to a moral formation, founded on the precepts and example of our divine Saviour. These four things belong, by a divine right, to the child of the poorest working-man; by a right more sacred than that which guards the inheritance of lands and titles to the child of the rich. A child of God and an heir to the kingdom of heaven holds these

four things by a higher title ; and his claim is under the jurisdiction of a divine Judge. But the school is the place and the provision for the insuring of these four vital parts of his right to the Christian child. They cannot be taught or learned elsewhere ; there is no other place of systematic and sufficient formation. And if so, then the school becomes the depository of the rights of parents, and of the inheritance of their children. The school is strictly a court of the Temple, a porch outside the Sanctuary. It cannot be separated from the Church. It was created by the Church, and the Church created it for her own mission to her children."

There is nothing in history better established than the fact that the Catholic Church has been at all times, and under the most trying circumstances, the generous foster-mother of education. She has labored especially, with untiring care, to educate the poor, who are her favorite children. It was the Catholic Church that founded, and endowed liberally, almost all the great universities of Europe. Protestants and infidels are very apt to overlook the incalculable benefits which the Church has conferred on mankind, and yet without her agency civilization would have been simply impossible.

Moreover, it is a well-known fact that the Catholic Church has always fought for the liberty to educate her children, not only in the necessary branches of science, but also, and above all, to teach them, at the same time, their religious duties towards God and their fellow-men. And who but an infidel can blame her for that ?

Every one must know that by the united efforts of the Catholic clergy and laity, schools, colleges, seminaries, boarding-schools for girls and boys, and other educational

establishments, have been erected in almost every part of the world, and erected without a cent of public money, which was so plentifully lavished upon Protestant institutions.

But, without leaving this country, do we not find in the various States of the Union, magnificent proofs of generous Catholic zeal in promoting everything connected with education? And have not the secular and religious clergy in so many places made the noblest exertions to erect institutions for the instruction of their flocks? And have not the laity assisted them in a most munificent manner? All this shows their firm conviction of the necessity of having Catholic schools for Catholic children; for "what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi, 26.) What will it profit you or your children to gain all knowledge, and to attain the greatest success in this world, if, through your fault, and through your exposing them to the danger of evil education, they suffer the loss of that faith, without which "it is impossible to please God?" (Heb. xi.)

Guided by this principle, Pope Pius IX. has declared that Catholics cannot "*approve of a system of educating youth unconnected with the Catholic Faith and the power of the Church, and which regards the knowledge of merely natural things, and only, or at least primarily, the ends of earthly social life.*" Catholic parents, especially priests, cannot approve an education which fits children only for this life, and ignores that life in which the soul is to live

* "Hanc propositionem auctoritate Nostra Apostolica reprobamus, proscribimus atque damnamus eamque ab omnibus Catholicæ Ecclesiæ filiis veluti reprobam, proscriptam atque damnatam omnino haberi volumus et mandamus," (Syllabus, Prop. xlviii.)

forever. As faith is the foundation of all our hopes for eternity, and as faith without good works is dead, we cannot choose for our children an education which would endanger their faith and morals, and consequently imperil their eternal welfare.

The same illustrious Pontiff, in his rescripts of October, 1847, and October, 1848, condemned, from their first institution, the Queen's Colleges of England, on account of their "grievous and intrinsic dangers to faith and morals;" and since then he has frequently repeated his sacred admonitions, warning the bishops and the faithful people to beware of evil systems of public instruction, and to secure, by every means in their power, the blessings of Catholic education for the rising generation.

Pope Leo, in his Encyclical Letter of Feb. 8th, 1884, says :

"And first, as regards family life, it is of the highest importance that the offspring of Christian marriages should be thoroughly instructed in the precepts of religion; and that the various studies by which youth is fitted for the world should be joined to that of religion. To divorce these is to wish that youth should be neutral as regards its duties to God; a system of education in itself fallacious, and particularly fatal in tender years, for it opens the door to atheism, and closes it on religion. Christian parents must, therefore, be careful that their children receive religious instruction as soon as they are capable of understanding it; and that nothing may, in the schools they attend, blemish their faith or their morals. Both the divine and the natural law impose this duty on them, nor can parents on any ground whatever

be freed from this obligation. The Church, guardian of the integrity of the Faith—which, by virtue of its authority, deputed from God its Founder, has to call all nations to the knowledge of Christian love and which is consequently bound to watch keenly over the teaching and up-bringing of the children placed under its authority by baptism—has always expressly condemned *mixed* or *neutral* schools; over and over again she has warned parents to be ever on their guard in this most essential point. To obey the Church in this is to obey the requirements of social utility, and to serve in the most excellent manner the common welfare. Those, indeed, whose early days were not enlightened by religious instruction, grow up without any knowledge whatever of the greatest truths, which alone can nourish in man the love of virtue, and repress in him his evil passions; such as, for instance, the ideas of God the Creator, of God the Judge and Avenger, of the rewards and punishments in another life, of the heavenly help offered to us by Jesus Christ for the conscientious and holy fulfilment of our duties. Where these are unknown, all intellectual culture will prove unhealthy; young people, unaccustomed to the fear of God, will not endure the restraint of an upright life, they will not venture even to deny anything to their passions, and will easily be seduced into troubling the State.”

We deem it unnecessary to give here the objections made by nominal and moderate Catholics. We have answered them in Volume “Dignity, Authority and Duties of Parents,” Chapters XXV, XXVI, and XXVII. *Roma locuta est, causa finita.* No good Catholic, no good priest has any objection to make concerning the necessity

of Catholic schools. He is thoroughly convinced of it. He holds for certain that nothing so effectually destroys religion in a country, as a godless system of instruction, whilst he believes, at the same time, that a good Christian education contributes to preserve true religion, and to spread the practice of every virtue and of good works through the land. He speaks like the celebrated convert to our religion and layman of great learning, when I had a conversation with him on this subject. "I had," said he, "the greatest trouble to keep my son from falling into infidelity, though he was naturally inclined to piety. I had him educated in one of the best colleges in the country, and I feel surprised at the fact that so many of the young men educated there have become infidels. I cannot account for this otherwise than by presuming that the religious training there is not solid enough; that the heathen world is too much read and studied; that principles somewhat too lax are in vogue; that the truths of our religion are taught too superficially; that the principles which underlie the dogmas are not sufficiently explained, inculcated, and impressed upon the minds of the young men, and that their educators fail in giving them a correct idea of the spirit and essence of our religion, which is based on divine revelation, and invested in a body divinely commissioned to teach all men, authoritatively, and infallibly, in all its sacred and immutable truths—truths which we are consequently bound in conscience to receive without hesitation.

"Now what I have said of certain colleges applies also, unhappily, to many of our female academies; they are by no means what they should be, according to the spirit of the Church; they conform too much to the spirit of

the world ; they have too many human considerations ; they make too many allowances for Protestant pupils at the expense of the Catholic spirit and training of our young Catholic women ; they yield too much to the spirit of the age ; in a word, they attend more to the intellectual than to the spiritual culture of their pupils.

“ But what is even more surprising than all this is, that some of our Catholic clergy, and among them some even of those who should be first and foremost in fighting for sound religious principles, and see that our youth are carefully brought up in them, are too much inclined to yield to the godless spirit of the age,—to the so-called liberal views on Catholic education, which have been clearly and solemnly condemned by the Holy See. They tell us poor people in the world, that, if we are careless in bringing up our children as good Catholics, we are worse than heathens, and have denied our faith ! that, if our children are lost through our neglect, we also shall be lost ! I would like to know whether God will show himself more merciful to those of our clergy who take so little interest in the religious instruction of our youth ; who make little or no exertions to establish Catholic schools where we could have our children properly educated ; who, when they condescend to instruct them, do so in bombastic language, in scholastic terms which the poor children cannot understand, taking no pains to give their instructions in plain words, and in a manner attractive for children.

“ As the pastor is, so is the flock. We enjoy full religious liberty in our country. All we need is good, courageous pastors,—standard-bearers in the cause of God and the people. We would be only too happy to follow

them, and to support and encourage them by every means in our power. What an immense amount of good could thus be achieved in a short time! Our religion never loses anything of its efficacy upon the minds and hearts of men; it can lose only so far as it is not brought to bear upon them. What is most wanted is not argument, but instruction and explanation.

“I can hardly account for this want of zeal for true Catholic education in so many of our clergy, who are otherwise models of every virtue, than by supposing the fact that their ecclesiastical training must have been deficient in many respects, or that they must have spent their youth in our godless public schools, where they were never thoroughly imbued with the true spirit of the Catholic Church—the spirit of God.

“I have quietly, for some time, studied, as far as I was able, the prevailing spirit of our people; noted the remarks and efforts of a few ecclesiastics, laics, and Catholic periodicals, (and, alas! how very few) made in behalf of the sacred obligation of education, and endeavored to compare the results with the efforts, and the observation *made* is sadly disheartening.

“Examine the Catholic almanacs, the census of the various States, or those of the United States, and ascertain, first, the number of Catholics in the country; second, the numbers of those between the ages of six and twenty-one years; then divide this last number by the number of Catholic schools, including colleges, academies, convents, parochial and private schools, and the *quotient* will be what? *Indifference to Catholic education!* In other words, this simple operation in arithmetic demonstrates that in no country claiming to be enlightened can

be found *thirteen millions* of Catholics with such an inadequate number of schools as we have, or are likely to have, if a policy widely different from that which prevails at present be not *early* inaugurated and steadily pursued. It is, indeed, true—and I willingly, cheerfully admit the fact—that most of our priests, and nearly all our bishops, are exerting themselves zealously, strenuously, and with marked success, in the cause of education. But *not all* the priests; *not all* the bishops are enlisted in the cause, nor are all in *positive* sympathy with it. All may be perhaps, agreed in believing that Catholic education is necessary; but *all are not* agreed as to the necessity of Catholic schools, in which it may be secured. Unanimity exists as to the *end*, but not as to the *means* to that end. And this lack or absence of unanimity, especially among those whose peculiar province it is to shape and direct Catholic sentiment, has produced, and continues to produce, the most injurious consequences.

“Many of the clergy are *not* opposed to the public schools, nor do they feel reluctant to publicly make known the ‘faith which is in them,’ when an opportunity presents itself. Many are opposed to these schools, but theirs is a *negative* opposition; that is, they are not in favor of them. They believe that Catholic schools are better and safer, but they do not consider it a duty incumbent on themselves to undertake the labor and trouble inseparable from the establishment and direction of parochial schools. These reverend gentlemen are simply neutrals; that is, *if men may, or can be neutral on such a subject*.

“Thought is free, and it may, perhaps, be impossible to have entire unanimity in matters of opinion only; but if one of the ends sought to be attained by the

Church be the securing to each child a Catholic education, it is very evident that the establishment of schools should not be left to the discretion or whim of the several pastors. Upon subjects far less important than that of schools, the statutes in many dioceses are clear, explicit, binding. Is there any reason for their silence on the subject of education? Our bishops have not only the power, but the will, to enforce such matters of discipline as they deem necessary. This granted,—because too clear to be denied,—does it not follow that the establishment of schools may be made obligatory upon pastors? Let discipline be made uniform, and we will not witness such an anomalous condition of things as exists at present. Duties are never in collision; obligations never clash. There is but one right thing to be done, but one right cause to pursue, all things considered; and whatever is in conflict with this cannot be a duty, whatever may seem to be its claim. In some parts of this country, the sacraments are refused to those who decline to have their children attend Catholic schools, where such are convenient; but there is not, so far as I am informed, in those parts, any *rule* making it obligatory upon pastors to establish such schools. In other sections, to withhold the sacraments for such a cause is unthought of. The consequence is that many Catholics are at a loss to understand why it is that an act which subjects them to such severe punishment in one diocese should in another not even call forth a mild reproof—pass unnoticed. In actions indifferent in themselves, it may be wise ‘when in Rome, to do as the Romans do;’ but where *principle* is involved such an easy adaptability cannot be encouraged.

“In this laxity of discipline, in this want of uniformi-

ty, in this wide difference of opinion among those who give direction to Catholic sentiment, and who speak, as it were *ex cathedra*, may be found some of the causes for the indifference existing among our people on the question of Catholic education.

“ But it is so convenient to allow things to go on in the old way, and so hard to establish anything new. Yet a thing which, in the great struggle between the Church and Antichrist, is one of the most powerful means of victory, is really worth the highest sacrifice. Indeed, the establishment of thorough Catholic schools is the most important step that can be taken by our clergy to solve certain social questions, and which can be solved only on Catholic principles. The greatest social danger of the age is the dechristianization and demoralization of the rising generation. This dechristianization and demoralization are, to a great extent, the cause of the wretchedness of society, and make that wretchedness almost incurable. What enormous dimensions has this evil assumed under the present godless system of education in the public schools ! But even the evils resulting from this system might to a great extent be healed, if the clergy labor, with the zeal and fire of apostolic times, to have good schools, and imbue our children therein with thorough Christian knowledge, with fervent piety and earnest devotion. Oh ! if the children of light were only as wise as the children of the world, we would witness wonders.

“ It is true that evil makes its way in this world better than goodness does ; but it is also true that goodness does not prosper, because those who represent it take the matter too lightly, or do not go about it as they should.

More is often done for the worst cause than men are willing to do or to sacrifice for the best. A great deal has of late years been done for the establishment and maintenance of Catholic schools. Let us sincerely hope that a great deal more will be done, and more universally : and need requires us not only to pray, but to work with all our strength, with inexhaustible patience and devotion, for the establishment of Catholic schools, and make, for this noblest of objects, sacrifices not less generous than those made by infidels in behalf of godless education."

"Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord : Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I myself come upon the shepherds, I will require my flock at their hand." (Ezek. xxxiv, 9, 10.)

If our Lord will require his flock at the hands of their pastors, he will undoubtedly require from them a stricter account of that part of his flock for which he has always shown a particular predilection, that is, for children.

"There are some of the clergy who say, 'It is so much trouble to get up schools, and to support them ; where to get the teachers and the money to pay them.' True, it is troublesome to establish schools ; but we have to live on troubles. Our very troubles become our ladder to heaven, if borne for the sake of Jesus Christ. If we do not wish to undergo troubles and trials of every kind for the sake of Jesus, and for the salvation of those for whom he shed his heart's blood, what claim can we have to heaven ! Our right and claim to heaven can be established only by following our Lord, and by carrying our cross after him.

"As to the fear of not getting money for building and supporting schools, let us look at those magnificent

school buildings in every city and town of the country. Where did those priests who built them get the money? It was no angel from heaven that brought it. The parents of the children that are educated in these schools gave it. Let us rest assured that money will not be wanting to a priest, if his zeal is great enough to show to parents the absolute necessity of Catholic schools, in order to save their children from becoming scourges for society in this life, and from becoming victims of hell in the next. Let a priest unite great charity and affection for children, and he will at once lay hold on the hearts and money of their parents. Those parents who have no money to offer, will most willingly offer their labor for so noble a work. Parents are but too happy to have a priest who takes a lively interest in the temporal and eternal happiness of their children. For the promotion of this happiness, parents will give to the priest the last cent they have got—nay, their own heart's blood, if necessary. This we have witnessed many times.

“We know of priests who established schools in country places, where the people made very little money; yet the people were but too happy to give them money for the building and support of schools. There are hundreds of priests who can bear witness to this fact.

“And should there be refractory characters who do not care about a good Catholic education, let priests refuse them absolution, as penitents who are not disposed for the worthy reception of the sacraments. They cannot scruple to do this.

“The voice of common-sense, the voice of sad experience, the voice of Catholic bishops, and especially the voice of the Holy Father, are raised against, and con-

demn the public school system as a huge humbug, injuring, not promoting, personal virtue and good citizenship, and as being most pernicious to Catholic faith, and life, and all good morals. A pastor, therefore, cannot maintain the contrary opinion without incurring great guilt before God and the Church. He cannot allow parents to send their children to such schools of infidelity and immorality. He cannot give them absolution, and say, '*Innocens sum!*' For he must know and understand that parents are bound before the Almighty to raise their children good Catholics, to plant in their hearts the seed of godliness and parental obedience: this was their promise at the baptismal font. They are bound in conscience to redeem this promise; but they cannot do this as long as their children go to the public schools; for it must be conceded that children attending these godless public schools are, generally speaking, in *proximate occasion of sin*, and this occasion is *in esse* for them. This being so, parents cannot receive absolution unless they remove from their children this occasion of sin. 'I do not see,' said the Archbishop of Cincinnati—and many other bishops say the same—'I do not see how parents can be absolved, if they are not disposed to support Catholic schools, and send their children thereto.'

"'Duty compels us,' says the Bishop of Vincennes, Ind., in his Pastoral Letter of 1872,—'duty compels us to instruct the pastors of our churches to refuse absolution to parents who, having the facilities and means of educating their children in a Christian manner, do, from worldly motives, expose them to the danger of losing their faith. This measure, however, being very rigorous, we intend that it shall be recurred to in extreme cases only, and when all means of persuasion have been exhausted.'

“As for teachers, there is now but very little difficulty to obtain Sisters. Besides, there are everywhere many young women who have received a splendid education, and who would feel but too happy to become teachers for our children, and bring them up in such a manner as to fit them for business in this life, and for heaven hereafter.

“But why so many objections? It was in the following manner that two bishops silenced all such objections, and made Catholic schools spring up all over their dioceses in a short time: they told their priests that, were they not to have schools within a certain limited time, they would dismiss them from their dioceses; and that, should their parishioners not be willing to provide the means for establishing and supporting Catholic schools, they would withdraw from them their priests. This looks like believing in the Catholic Church. From the moment that the priests saw this determination of their bishop, the people were overjoyed at it. *Catholic schools*, and, with them, *Catholic life*, sprang up, and diffused itself at once all over the two dioceses.

“Let our clergy take courage, and the Lord will dispose the hearts of the rich and the poor in their favor: the hearts of the rich to provide them with means, the hearts of the poor to aid them, by their prayers, in the promotion of so noble a work as the establishment of good Catholic schools.”

It was thus that the good old gentleman spoke to me. He uttered great truths. He was a true Catholic. His language is that of all good Catholics and priests in the country. I have often heard it. It is no exaggeration to assert that the salvation of parents and of those of our clergy who have charge of congregations, depends, in a

great measure, on the solicitude with which they promote the thorough Catholic education of the children who are confided to their care.

What a shame for parents and pastors of souls to know that the devil, in alliance with the wicked, is at work, day and night, for the ruin and destruction of youth, and to be so little concerned about their eternal loss!

Would to God that all pastors of souls could say in truth what Bishop O'Farrell in his farewell address to his parishioners in St. Peter's Church in New York said on the subject of education, viz :

"I came here a stranger, after fourteen years of labor in another mission, and I can say from the bottom of my heart that, after laboring in this for thirteen years, I feel I can never discharge the obligations I owe the congregation. It is now that I realize my shortcomings in the ministry. But there is one thing I may say that perhaps will go far to cover my defects, and that is the love that I bore for the children of the parish, and the means I was instrumental in providing for their education. My greatest, deepest regret in leaving is that I have to part from the schools. When I assumed the pastoral charge of St. Peter's parish eight years ago, I turned my attention at once to the establishment of schools where the religious education of your children would be attended to. Since that time sums of money were raised for their support sufficient to erect a large church. In addition to this the debt of the church, which was \$130,000 when I took charge, has been reduced to \$40,000, and the property connected with the schools is valuable enough to pay all the interest on the debt.

"Now, my dear brethren, let me say that my thoughts

ever on leaving you will be for the little children. Oh, take care, above all things of your children ! There is not a place in the world where there are so many pitfalls in their path as in this city, even with the best religious training they can receive. I conjure you by the blood of Jesus which was shed for them—”

The remainder of the sentence was lost in a loud outburst of weeping on the part of the congregation. There was not a person in the edifice who was not affected at this point.

“If I have any hope,” Bishop O’Farrell resumed, “of enjoying the beatific vision hereafter, it will be when I offer to the Eternal Judge my labors for the children—to him who said, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me,’ and who further assures us that ‘Those who instruct others into salvation shall shine like the stars for all eternity.’ ”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRIEST IN THE CONFESSIONAL—THE PRIEST MUST BE A LEARNED AND KIND FATHER.

The origin of the sacraments is heavenly ; their institution is divine : their effects are supernatural. The sacraments close the gates of hell and open the portals of heaven. They give life to the dead ; they restore sinners to the friendship of God ; they nourish the supernatural life of the soul. “*Per quæ omnis vera justitia vel incipit, vel cœpta augetur, vel amissa, reparatur.*” (Conc. Trid. Sess. vii, in Procœm.) The sacraments are the fruit of the Blood of Christ ; they apply to our souls his infinite merits ; they flow from his side, or rather from his sacred heart. “*De Christi latere manantia,*” says St. Augustine. (*De Civit Dei*, i, 15.)

This great Doctor of the Church compares the act of justification to the act of creation. “*Judicet qui potest,*” he says, “*utrum magis sit justos creare, quam impios justificare.*” (*Tract. 72 in Joan.*)

Each of these acts requires an almighty power ; but the act of justification is, moreover, a display of God’s mercy. “*Certe, si æqualis utrumque potentiæ, hoc majoris est misericordiæ.*” (*Ibid.*)

O priest of the Most High ! how great is the honor which God has conferred on you in making you the dispenser of his mysteries. Were a king to give one of his courtiers the key of his treasury with power to distribute his riches to all who were in need, were he to give that courtier, moreover, the power to open and to close all the pris-

ons of his kingdom ; were he to give him power over the life and death of his subjects, how proud, how thankful would that courtier feel. Yet all these honors and privileges are nothing when compared with those that you, O priest of the Lord, have received from God. This immortal King of ages has placed in your hands the treasures of grace, the keys of his kingdom. You make use of these extraordinary powers every time that you administer the sacraments. In these blessed moments you draw upon yourself the admiring gaze of heaven and earth. “ *Spectaculum facti sumus mundo et angelis, et hominibus.*” You are a spectacle to angels and to men. O what glory do you give to God, what joy to the angels, what blessings do you draw down upon yourself and others, if you perform worthily the noble task imposed on you. On the other hand, what dishonor to God, what scandal to your neighbor, what chastisements do you draw down on yourself, if you perform these sublime functions without faith and without reflection.

You destroy in your own heart and in the hearts of those who see you the divine character of these sacred functions ; you reduce them to the level of purely human actions.

Nothing was more edifying than the manner in which St. Charles Borromeo administered the sacraments. He meditated a moment before commencing, and during the exercise of his sacred functions, his eyes, his hands, all the movements and attitudes of his body were in perfect harmony with the great actions he performed. The people in Church were so edified by him that they stayed there nearly all day ; they seemed to be charmed by the piety of the holy Cardinal. “ *Populum integros fere dies*

variis functionum exercitationibus intentum suaviter in ecclesia retinebat.”

The administration of all the sacraments involves great responsibility, but especially that of the sacrament of penance. To administer the sacrament of penance worthily, the priest must be :

1. A learned and kind father.
2. A just and impartial judge.
3. A pious and prudent physician.

The Priest must be a learned and kind father.

What do you do, O priest of the Lord, when you exercise worthily the divine power of absolution? You carry out the magnificent designs of God. You restore to its original splendor the most beautiful of his works—the human soul. You destroy the odious wall that separates God from his creature. You destroy sin which is essentially opposed to his infinite perfections. You spare him new insults by destroying that which alone can offend him. You rejoice the heart of Jesus Christ, for by you he reaps the sweet fruit of his sufferings and death. You introduce the holy Spirit into the temple in which he delights to dwell, and which he quits only with reluctance. You give to the angels and saints, companions and sharers in their eternal happiness. O what glory for God! What joy, what triumph for those who love! “Dico vobis, quod ita gaudium erit in cœlo super uno peccatore pœnitentiam agente, quam super nonaginta novem justis qui non indigent pœnitentia.” (Luke xv, 7.) What consolation for the Church! She weeps over the death of her children, and you bring them back full of life to her tender embrace.

It is this function which gives you a particular right to the glorious title of saviour of your brethren. It is especially in the confessional that you concur directly and immediately in their salvation. When you labor in the other occupations of the sacred ministry, when you preach and instruct, you prepare souls for the life of grace ; but when you grant absolution, you restore them to life. If the preacher brings souls to God, the confessor saves them. The preacher teaches men the will of God, the confessor makes them execute the divine will. The preacher points out the remedies for our spiritual maladies, the confessor applies these remedies and heals us. The preacher prepares the people for the confessor. St. Alphonsus used to say, "The preacher sows, the confessor reaps," and he added, "The priest who loves not the confessional, has no love for souls." The holy Pontiff Pius V used to say : "If we had good confessors everywhere, we would soon see a complete reform in the world." *Dentur idonei confessarii, ecce omnium Christianorum plena reformatio.*" The office of confessor is difficult and dangerous. On account of its difficulty and danger the Council of Trent has called it an office to be dreaded even by angels. "*Angelicis humeris formidandum.*" (Sess. 6. c. 1.)

What can be more perilous, says St. Lawrence Justinian, than to make ourselves responsible for the souls of others. "*Periculosa res est pro peccatoribus se fidejussorem constituere.*" (De justif. c, 6. n. 3.) St. Gregory says that no error is more hurtful than that which is committed in the direction of souls. "*Nullibi periculosius erratur.*" (Past. part 1. c. 1.) If a soul is lost through the fault of her confessor, God will hold him responsible for that soul. "I

will require my flock at their hand." (Ezech. xxxiv, 10.) "Obey your prelates," writes the Apostle, "for they watch as beings to render an account of your souls." (Heb. xiii, 17.) According to St. Gregory, a confessor is responsible for as many souls as he has penitents. "Quot regendis subditis præest, reddendæ apud judicem rationis tempore, ut ita dicam, tot solus animas habet." (Lib. 24, mor., c. 16.) "Si horremus dum peccatorum propriorum rationem reddituri sumus," says St. Chrysostom, "quid illi expectandum est, qui multorum causas sit dicturus." (Lib. 3. de Sacerd. c. ult.)

These words are applicable especially to those who hear confessions through worldly motives, through temporal interest, or through self-conceit, or who have not acquired the necessary learning. "Gratia indiget plurima et sapientia non modica," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "qui animas ad vitam resuscitare conatur." (De Compunct, p. 2, n.7)

He who wishes to hear confessions, stands in need of extensive knowledge. Some imagine the science of moral theology to be easy, but Gerson justly says that it is the most difficult of all sciences. And before him St. Gregory said: "Ars artium regimen animarum." (Pon. past. p. 1.) St. Gregory Nazianzen writes: "Scientia scientiarum mihi esse videtur hominem regere."—St. Francis de Sales also used to say that the office of confessor is of all offices the most important and the most difficult. It is the most important, because on it depends the eternal salvation of souls. It is the most difficult, because the science of moral theology requires a knowledge of many other sciences, and embraces an immense variety of matter and because the decisions given in the

confessional must vary. "Circumstances alter cases," says the well-known proverb.

There are some who disdain to read the works of moralists, saying that to hear confessions it is enough to know the general principles of moral theology. To this I would answer that it is certain that all cases must be decided by the principles of theology; but there is sometimes great difficulty in applying these principles. This is especially what the moralists have done. They have labored to apply the principles of theology to particular cases.

Besides, there is a great number of positive laws contained in the Bulls and Decrees of Pontiffs, as well as in the ancient canons which a confessor is obliged to know. Of these laws he who neglects to study moral theology shall hardly be able to acquire a sufficient knowledge. The learned author of "*the Instruction for Young Confessors*," justly says that many confessors are as deficient in moral theology as they are profound in the speculative sciences. Monsignor Sperelli also asserts that it is a great error to devote all one's time to scholastic theology and neglect moral theology as if the study of moral theology were only loss of time. Such confessors, he says, are afterwards unable to distinguish one sin from another. He then adds: "Qui error confessarios simul et penitentes in æternum interitum trahet." (De ep. p. 3. c. 4.) We must therefore be persuaded that, to hear confessions, great science is required.

The Church has always closed the sanctuary against ignorance. "Nullus ad sacra veniat indoctus aliter ordinaturis et ordinandis imminet Dei et Ecclesiæ vindicta." (Conc. Telet. 8.) If the blind lead the blind, they fall

into the ditch. Benedict XIV declares that ignorance of moral theology in confessors is one of the greatest calamities that can befall the Church. “*Inter majores Ecclesiæ calamitates eam esse, quod confessarii morali theologia parum imbuti essent, et ea, quæ contra Dei legem a fidelibus perpetrantur, parum dignoscerent.*” (Instit. 32.) “*Affirmo in statu damnationis esse eum confessarium,*” says St. Alphonsus, “*qui sine sufficienti scientia ad confessiones suscipiendas se exponit.*” (Praxis Confess.) “*Nullus confessarius,*” he continues, “*intermittere debet theologiæ moralis studium.*” We must study not only to learn what we have never known, but also to call to mind what we may have forgotten. “*Quia ex tot diversis et disparibus, quæ ad hanc scientiam pertinent, multa, quamvis lecta, temporis progressu decedunt a mente.*”

In judging the consciences of others without wounding our own, it is not sufficient to know exactly the extent of our powers—*scientia potestatis*. We must be well versed in civil, canon and common law—*scientia juris*. We must have a clear idea of what is commanded and what is forbidden. We must know how to distinguish between mortal and venial sin; between what is of counsel and what is of precept. What a crime to ruin souls in the very tribunal which was instituted to save them! The confessor must be ready to dispel every doubt, to decide every case, no matter how complicated; he must know how to answer the most embarrassing questions. He must therefore apply himself continually to the study of theology.

Great learning is necessary for the confessor, but “*great sanctity,*” says St. Alphonsus, “*is even more*

necessary." "Nemo nisi valde sanctus," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "absque sui detrimento proximorum curis occupatur." The confessor requires a great fund of charity in receiving all,—the poor, the ignorant, and the vicious.

Everywhere representing him who was called the friend of sinners, the priest is especially in the confessional the minister of mercy, "the vicar of God's love." (St. Ambrose.) There he restores souls to the life of grace, and endures for them the pains and sorrows of a mother. "Filioli mei, quos iterum parturio, donec formetur Christus in vobis." (Gal. iv, 10.) The good priest has the heart of a father, as the penitent truly calls him. He encourages and invites sinners to return; he smooths their pathway to heaven. He is not satisfied with remaining at the door of the fold to open it to the stray sheep that returns. The good pastor seeks the lost sheep; he calls it again and again; he gives himself no rest until he has found it. "Vadet ad illam quæ perierat, donec inveniatur eam." (Luke xv, 4.)

The father of the prodigal perceived his son from afar, and his heart yearned for him with compassion. "Misericordia motus est." A stranger would say: If this young man is unhappy, it is his own fault. Is he really a penitent, or is it want that forces him to return? A father reasons far otherwise. However culpable his son may be, his father forgets his faults at the sight of his distress. He waits not till the son approaches. No; he runs to meet him, to fold him in his arms. Happy the priest who knows how to attract the prodigal to the confessional by his zeal and the charm of his sweetness! Happy the flock that Heaven has confided to such a priest!

As the frequentation of the sacraments is an almost certain mark of the good state of a parish, we could easily predict what his parish would be in time. To make the people esteem and love confession, to make confession easy for all, is one of the best means to save souls. Every one wished to confess to St. Francis de Sales. Even after he was elevated to the episcopacy, he passed whole days, and often a part of the night, in hearing the confessions of those who came to him from all directions. A truly apostolic man, John de Nevelle, whose life was spent in preaching and hearing confessions, was about to die when a beggar presented himself at the monastery and wished to confess to him. The lay-brothers, knowing that the priest was at the point of death, sent the man away, saying that the Father was not in a fit state to hear him. When the dying priest heard of this, he ordered the brothers to recall the poor man, and, with the little breath that yet remained, he heard his confession, and gave him absolution. He declared that he would not refuse the poor man for a thousand crowns. A few hours later, the zealous priest breathed his last. For some years before his death, this same religious was cruelly tormented by gout. A renowned professor of medicine offered to cure him, free of charge. He promised that he would restore him to health, if he would rest for a certain time. "For how long must I be confined to my room?" asked the patient. "For three months at the very least," answered the physician. "Three months," exclaimed the astonished religious. "I have not the heart to waste even three weeks in trying to cure this wretched carcass. I must labor for souls for which Jesus Christ shed his precious blood." (Thom. Cantipr. Apum. lib. ii, c. 34.)

Some priests are partial. If a poor man comes to confess, to tell his troubles or to ask advice, the priest is engaged, he has no time; but if some fashionable lady comes in silk and flashing diamonds, ah! the good priest has time enough!

One day a certain priest was informed by his house-keeper that two persons wished to go to confession. "Confession!" exclaimed the priest. "Who is there so early?" "Susie, Judge Rich's daughter, and Laura Di Bolus' daughter," answered the house-keeper. "Ha!" said the priest, "I must put on my best cassock. Who would have thought they would be here so early!" He hurries off to the church and the house-keeper makes his comments on the subject: "Yes, everything must be new when they come!"

As for those weak-minded whose confessionals are always so surrounded by the *devota feminea sexu* that the sterner sex can find no place; who are all honey to a few chosen devotees, and all vinegar and gall to the luckless wight that dares intrude within the privileged circle, of such we will not speak here. Every sane man sees that such conduct is highly imprudent, dangerous, and blameworthy, in fact, unworthy of a man!

There are other priests who hear the confessions of only pious persons; but when a poor man comes with a conscience loaded with sin, they hear him with impatience, and send him away with reproaches. The poor sinner who has perhaps come to confession only after a great struggle, seeing himself dismissed in such a manner, conceives a horror of the sacrament; he stays away from confession, and, in despair, abandons himself to a life of sin. To such confessors the Redeemer says what

he said to his disciples: "You know not of what spirit you are." (Luke ix, 55.) Such is not the conduct of those confessors, who in obedience to the exhortation of the Apostle, put on the bowels of charity. "Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, the bowels of mercy." (Col. iii, 12.) When a sinner comes to confession to these charitable priests, the more abandoned he is the more they endeavor to assist him, and the more kindly they treat him. "You are not appointed judges," says Hugo de St. Victor, "to chastise, but rather to heal sinners." (Misc. 1. lib. 1. tr. 49. lib 3.) Of course the sinner must be admonished that he may realize his wretched state and the danger of damnation to which he is exposed; but he must be always admonished with charity; he must be excited to confidence in the mercy of God, and must be taught the means by which he can amend his life. And should the confessor be obliged to defer absolution, he ought to dismiss the penitent with sweetness; he should appoint a day for him to return, and point out the remedies which he must use in order to prepare himself for absolution. Sinners are saved in this way; harshness and reproaches only drive them to despair.

One day a certain man who had been living in sin for many years went to St. Bernard to speak to him of the state of despair in which he was on account of his long sinful life. St. Bernard encouraged him to trust in the mercy of God. "Promise our Lord," said the saint, "that with his grace you will not commit your habitual sin for at least three days, and then come to me again." The sinner made this promise, kept it and returned to St. Bernard. "As you have avoided your habitual sin for three days," said the saint, "will you promise again to

avoid it for three days more, and then come and see me again?" "I will," said the sinner. He kept his promise and went again to St. Bernard, who besought him again to overcome his evil habit for three days more and return to him. He renewed his promise and kept it, and then went back to St. Bernard, saying quite confidently: "Father, I have overcome my evil habit for nine days in succession. I will no more promise you to overcome my besetting passion for three days again; for I see that, with the grace of God, I can avoid mortal sin forever; and I solemnly promise Almighty God and your Reverence not to commit it again to the end of my life." He kept his promise and became a saint.

St. Francis de Sales used to say that "more flies are caught by one drop of honey than by a barrel of vinegar."

But some will say: "If we treat sinners in this manner, a great deal of our time will be taken up, and others who are waiting cannot be heard." I answer, that "it is better to hear one confession well than to hear a great number imperfectly. Besides, the confessor has not to give an account to God of those who are waiting, but only of the one whose confession he has begun." (St. Alphonsus.) Our dear Saviour permitted the chief of the Apostles to fall three times, says St. Chrysostom, and forgave him as soon as he repented. By this example he taught priests with what facility they should grant the pardon solicited by true repentance, and how carefully they should guard against that inflexible rigor which only leads sinners to despair.

"If you wish to save any one," says St. Ignatius Loyola, "you must above all things convince him of your love for him."

The amiable St. Francis de Sales never hurried his penitents. He always gave them time to confess everything. When any one came to him who was ashamed or unwilling to confess everything, he did all he could to gain his confidence. "Do you not call me 'Father'?" he used to say. "Why, then, are you afraid to open your heart to me? See, God is waiting. His arms are open to receive you. The priest is God's representative. No matter what sins you have committed, I will not be astonished."

After confession he would say: "Oh, how glad I am that you have told everything. Now the angels rejoice over you. I congratulate you from my heart. Promise me now you will never commit those sins again."

The saint always advised his penitents to confess, not only the sin, but also the cause of the sin, so as to prevent a relapse. He was especially clear and precise in settling doubts and scruples, so that his penitents went away calm and happy.

He once undertook a journey of sixty leagues to hear the confession of a poor old man who expressed a desire to see him.

In the Curé d'Ars we have a striking example of a good, charitable confessor in our own day. He heard confessions from eighteen to twenty hours daily. He interrupted his labors only to say mass, to recite his office and to take his frugal meal. Every confessor knows how wearisome it is for mind and body to remain for hours in the confessional. Many a time the good people kept watch all night long, in order to confess to him in the morning. He had an iron railing around his confessional, so that each one had to come in his turn. At

6 o'clock he said Mass, then blessed the various articles of devotion. He then broke his fast with a little milk. He then heard confessions till 10 o'clock. After that he knelt in the sacristy and recited the little hours, then he heard the confessions of the weak and sickly. At 11 o'clock he gave a short instruction, after which he took his dinner. He then visited the orphan asylum and returned to Church. Here he said Vespers on his knees, after which he heard confessions again till 5 o'clock. At 5 o'clock he heard the confessions of the sick in the sacristy. The majority of those who came made general confessions. He seemed to take a special interest in every one that came to him.

Would to God that all confessors were equally kind and patient! Oh! how many souls have been ruined by harsh and imprudent confessors! Some time ago a good priest was called to a dying girl. As he entered the room he saluted her, but was surprised to receive no answer. She even refused to make any confession. The good priest did everything to induce her to confess; but in vain. Finally she burst into tears and said: "God knows I was a virtuous girl. I never missed my Communion. Three years ago I went to confession to a certain priest. I tried honestly to make a good confession; but the priest spoke roughly and called me an infamous name. That morning I did not go to Communion. From that day to this I had no peace of heart. Ever since I have hated the very sight of a priest. I have never confessed since, and now that I stand on the brink of eternity, I do not intend to confess. May God have mercy on me!"

You may imagine how the good priest must have felt at the moment. He tried every means to induce the

unhappy girl to make her peace with God. It was only after desperate efforts that he succeeded at last in reconciling her with God. On his way home the priest prayed with all his heart: "*Domine, custodi vias meas, ut non delinquam in lingua mea.*"

A good priest had to hear confessions one evening until he was very tired. Several times he was tempted to leave the confessional. Finally he looked and saw that there was but one man left. The priest got up, told the man that he was very tired and begged him to come back next morning.

Next morning the man came back, but the crowd was so great that he could not come near the confessional. Finally the priest had to say Mass without having been able to hear him. That very night the unhappy man drowned himself. The priest was ever after tormented by the thought that if he had heard his confession he might have saved him. It was a sad lesson for him. Henceforth he never let any one go unheard, and whenever he was called to the confessional, he went without delay.

O priest of God! How many sinners would hasten to you for pardon and consolation if they thought they could find in you the kindness and affection of a father! Ah! if you know not how to attract them, at least be always ready to receive them kindly when they present themselves. If you are called to the confessional, go instantly. You know not the secrets of the Lord. Allow not the precious moment of grace to be lost. Who knows whether it will ever return!

Those who have been a long time away from confession, or who have perhaps made sacrilegious confessions, have often a long and terrible struggle before they can

bring themselves to confess; they are often proud and easily hurt. Receive them, therefore, with kindness. Do not make the burden of confession harder than it is. Confessors who are cold, stiff, and heartless, who instead of encouraging the poor sinner, only repel and embitter him, are a terrible scourge to the Church. Ah! take care lest you quench that precious spark of sacred fire that God has cast into the sinner's heart. This is the favorable moment, and if we profit by it, it may be the moment of salvation for that soul. If you receive the penitent kindly, you almost always make a good impression on him. Encouraged and aided by your charity, he feels thankful to God, whose goodness he admires in that of his minister.

How many who had been for years making bad confessions, and who would probably have continued to do so till death, have been converted by the kind word of a prudent and pious confessor!

When the penitent is a stranger, it is well to congratulate him on the step he has taken. Life is short and the hour of death is uncertain. Tell him that there is nothing more honorable than to destroy sin. It is especially for this that the Son of God became man. Speak to the sinner of the joy those taste who return to the friendship of God. Tell him that it is not so difficult as some people imagine to make a good confession. Tell him not to be troubled, you will help him to confess his sins, that they will all be forgiven. God has waited so patiently for him, God has inspired him with the thought of going to confession and given him the courage to go. God was so merciful to him, how much more will he love him now when he sees him determined to serve him!

This paternal language will fill the heart of the penitent with confidence and will induce him to make a good confession. "*Charitas patiens est*," says the Apostle. These words of the Apostle are verified especially in the confessional. If all the confessor had to do was to listen to the accusations of the penitent to find out his dispositions and to give or refuse absolution, the hearing of confessions would not be so very difficult, or so meritorious. But often the confessor has to do everything. He must question the penitent. Sometimes even he has, as it were, to extort from him the confession. Often he must use every means to dispose the sinner for absolution. How often is he wearied and annoyed! Those who come to confession are perhaps not sufficiently sorry for their sins. Perhaps they are ignorant and must be instructed; they have doubts against faith and must be convinced. Sometimes timid and scrupulous persons come to the priest. They are greatly troubled and unable to explain the state of their soul. O what patience, what kindness does the confessor need to bear with so many spiritual infirmities! what wonderful self-control must he possess, especially when he sees the shocking crimes of the penitent, the callous indifference with which he accuses himself, and the little impression which even the most fervent exhortation makes on him. An indiscreet reprimand, a simple expression of astonishment, can sometimes produce the most serious consequences.

The life of a zealous confessor is a continual immolation of self; according to St. Francis de Sales, it is a continual martyrdom. This heroic patience is the fruit of charity. To be a good confessor, the priest must love God; he must love souls; he must love them as a father; he must sincerely desire their eternal happiness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PRIEST MUST BE A PIOUS AND PRUDENT PHYSICIAN.

The holy tribunal is surrounded by many dangers which are so much the more formidable the more they are ignored. The priest is not only the father and judge of souls; he is also their physician. As such he must be a man of piety and prudence.

1. *He must be a man of piety.* The first Council of Milan mentions this quality before all others. “In confessariis probandis hanc rationem habeant episcopi, ut pii, bene morati, docti, prudenest, patientes, de animarum salute solliciti, et fideles custodessint eorum, quæ in confessione audiuntur.” (Pars 2, tit. 6.)

Piety—that tender love for God and compassion for the neighbor—that ardent zeal for the adorable Master, whose interests we protect—that zeal for the salvation of souls, whose eternal happiness is so dear to God—piety, that sweet fruit of living faith, that unction of the Holy Ghost, so useful to all and so rich in promises for the present and for the future. . . Oh! how necessary it is for the confessor! How can we subdue the passions, how can we melt the icy heart of the sinner, if God does not grant us the light and ardor of his spirit? And to whom, ordinarily, does God communicate his gifts if not to pious priests—to those who are united to him by prayer, by purity of intention, and by the continual desire of pleasing him?

The pious priest gains the confidence of all. He encourages the timid; he arouses the slothful, and his piety furnishes him with those burning words, those darts of fire, which pierce the heart, because they come from the heart. It is piety which softens the pains and surmounts the insuperable difficulties so often encountered in the sacred ministry of the priesthood. It is piety which inspires that compassion, that sweetness, that true charity which the most obstinate sinners cannot resist. What can a priest do in the confessional when he is cold and languishing in piety? It is there that the priest must convert and direct sinners. What a fearful responsibility weighs on him! Leo XII says in his Encycl. for the Jubilee 1826: "Even if previously unfit, persons may be made fit for absolution on the spot, if the confessor knows the secret of dealing with them in an earnest, tender, and patient manner."

There are a great many sinners who present themselves at our tribunal, little disposed to receive the grace of the sacrament, some even very far from having the required disposition. These, however, could often be properly disposed, if the confessor were replenished with the charity of Jesus Christ, and treated them with more zeal, patience, and meekness. Such is the spirit of our divine Saviour. Is this the spirit that animates me? If I ignore in practice this manner of acting towards sinners, I am no better disposed to administer the sacraments than they are to receive them. "*Quod si præstare prætermittat, profecto non magis ipse dicendus est paratus ad audiendum quam cæteri ad confitendum accedere.*" Oh! how many confessors find their condemnation in these words of the vicar of Jesus Christ! Am

I of this number? I excuse and reassure myself by saying that I cannot absolve those who are not disposed. I forget that the Lord relies on me, on my charity, on my prudence, and piety to dispose these sinners for absolution.

2. *The priest must be a man of prudence.* As physician of souls he is obliged to study the nature and the gravity of the evil; he must choose and apply the proper remedies—three things which require great prudence.

In order to cure the maladies of the soul, the first thing the confessor must do is to find out the true state of the soul. Hence sincerity in confession cannot be too often recommended. The more advanced the age of the penitent, the higher his position in life, the greater his reputation for piety, the closer his relations with the pastor, the more danger there is that he will be tempted through false shame to conceal his sins in confession. A confessor who has good ground for suspecting that a penitent has concealed some sin through fear or shame should ask him whether he feels any scruple as to the past, and should encourage him to confess everything honestly. By such questions many souls are saved from sacrilege.

The confessor is bound to question especially habitual and relapsing sinners, and those who are living in the occasion of sin. They seldom or never tell, of their own accord, all that the confessor must know to form a correct judgment, and to apply the proper remedy. The priest, as judge, teacher, and physician, is bound, at least in charity, to aid the penitent by kind and prudent questions, and thus make his confession easier and more complete.

This is especially the case when the priest has good reason to fear that the penitent omits some grievous sin, or necessary circumstance, through carelessness, ignor-

ance, or false shame. To say the least, the priest is as much obliged to question the penitent as the physician is to question his patient. Cardinal Cajetan says positively that the confessor commits a mortal sin who neglects to question the penitent concerning what he is bound to know. Of course, one must avoid extremes and not put the same questions to all indiscriminately.

We are obliged to question especially those who are not well instructed : to send them off in order to examine their conscience better is as useless as it is uncharitable. "Interroget tantum de eis quæ probabiliter pœnitenti conveniunt juxta suam conditionem et capacitatem," says St. Alphonsus. (Hom. Apost. n. 607.)

Were this advice always followed, general confessions would be much easier for the priest and for the penitent. The confessor should try to find out the *number* of sins, at least in general, and also those *circumstances* that change the nature of the sin, and finally whether the penitent is in the *habit* or in the *occasion* of sin.

A most important duty of the confessor as spiritual physician is to probe the wounds of his penitent. This probing, however, may be every detrimental to the penitent as well as to the physician. Oh, how much discretion is required in penetrating the recesses of the human heart! Hence we should never put any question concerning sins against chastity unless forced by necessity or evident utility, and never in such a way as to scandalize the penitent, or teach him what he should not know. The confessor, for instance, should be very careful never to destroy, by any imprudent questions, the penitent's happy ignorance of crime, or the exalted idea the faithful usually have of priestly modesty and holiness. It is far

better to be wanting in the integrity of confession than to sin against prudence. Even if you sometimes avoid questioning the penitent concerning some important circumstance, do not be troubled. A greater good may require you to be silent. Content yourself with finding out the nature of the sin without inquiring how it was committed: and if some one, through ignorance or want of prudence should wish to explain, say to him kindly that it is not necessary. (Segneri. Confess. Inst. c. 2.)

“Let the confessor be very careful,” says St. Alphonsus, “never to make mention unnecessarily of the use of matrimony. It is a subject of which women are very shy of speaking, and about which they dislike exceedingly to be questioned. It will be enough, then, for the confessor to inquire whether the wife has yielded due obedience to her husband in all lawful things.”* In instructing a young woman about to be married, let the confessor refer her to her mother for certain things, and leave her to her own conscience for others.

When you have found out the malady as much as discretion permits, what must you do next? What treatment must you adopt? Should you use firmness, or condescension? The prudent confessor combines both. Like the Samaritan in the Gospel, he mingles oil with wine, and thus compounds the balm that can heal the wounds. “*Ut modo periti medici, similiter infundat vinum et oleum vulneribus sauciati.*” (Conc. Later. iv.)

The good confessor knows that the most powerful remedies are not always the best. Those alone are best which are best suited to the feebleness of the patient. Equally avoiding both extremes, the prudent confessor examines when and to whom he must give or refuse absolution.

* See note, p. 169.

“Videat diligenter sacerdos, quando et quibus conferenda, vel neganda, vel differenda sit absolutio, ne absolvat eos, qui talis beneficii sunt incapaces.” (Rom. Rit.)

“Great fortitude is necessary,” says St. Alphonsus, “in correcting sinners and in refusing absolution to those who have not the requisite dispositions, without regard to their rank or authority, or to the loss or injury which the confessor may sustain, or to the imputations of indiscretion or of ignorance which may be cast upon him. ‘Seek not,’ says the Holy Ghost, ‘to be made a judge unless thou hast strength enough to extirpate iniquities, lest thou fear the person of the powerful.’” (Eccl. vii, 6.) “Begone,” said a certain sinner one day to the priest who refused to absolve him, “begone, you are a brute.” “Go and study your theology better,” said another to his confessor who, for good reasons, could not absolve him. “But it cannot be avoided,” says St. Alphonsus; “confessors must submit to such trials and insults.”

The pious confessor does not act like those who, when they perceive a person deeply sunk in sin, immediately tell him that they cannot absolve him, thus refusing their ministry precisely to one who needs it the most. “Quæ quidem nemo non viderit quam longe ab eorum ratione distent, qui, ut gravius aliquod audiunt peccatum, aut aliquem sentiunt multiplici peccatorum genere infectum, statim pronuntiant se non posse absolvere : iis nempe ipsis mederi recusant, quibus maxime curandis ab eo sunt constituti qui ait : non est opus valentibus medicus, sed male habentibus.” (Leo XII, Encycl. 1826.)

Here especially the confessor must be very prudent. Too great facility in absolving only confirms the sinner in his evil habits, while excessive severity turns him away

from confession, and discourages him. The good confessor avoids laxism and rigorism. The laxist who never asks any questions, who absolves every one whether worthy or not ; who hears confessions by steam, and puts through a large number of penitents every hour—such a confessor only hardens the sinner and heaps sacrilege upon sacrilege. Would that lax confessor absolve so readily the man who refuses to pay him his pew-rent ? You will find that the most lax are rigorous enough in some things.

A certain confessor refused absolution to a poor servant because, though he went to Mass, he did not hear the sermon on Sundays ; yet the same confessor absolved a rich man who gave scandal by keeping a mistress, because this rich man had presented the church with a costly carpet !

The other extreme, which the good confessor avoids, is rigorism. Some are rigorous through want of study, others through over-much book learning ; and others again through natural harshness of disposition. The first class must study more good authors ; the second need experience, and the third must pray for the true spirit of a good confessor.

The rigorist makes confession a “*carnificina conscientiae*,” he turns the sacrament of mercy into an intolerable burden. St. Thomas of Villanova calls rigorist confessors “*impie pios*.” It is better that the confessor should sin “*excessu quam defectu amoris*.” The good confessor imitates the charity of our Lord ; he does “not break the reed that is bruised ; he does not extinguish the smoking flax.”

St. Alphonsus remarks “that a confessor exposes him-

self to as much danger of damnation by treating his penitents with too much rigor as he does by treating them with excessive indulgence. Too much indulgence, says St. Bonaventure, begets presumption, and too much rigor leads to despair: "*Cavenda est conscientia nimis larga et nimis stricta; nam prima generat præsumptionem, secunda, desperationem: prima sæpe salvat damnandum, secunda contra damnat salvandum.*" (Comm. Theol. de Verit. L. 2, cap. 32, n. 1.) There is no doubt that many err by being too indulgent. Such confessors do great harm to souls; ay, even the greatest harm; for libertines go in crowds to these lax confessors, and find in them their own perdition. It is also certain that confessors, who are too rigid, cause great evil. "You ruled over them with rigor, and with a high hand. And my sheep were scattered," &c. (Ezech. xxxiv, 4, 5.) Too much rigor, says Gerson, serves only to cast souls into despair, and from despair to the abyss of vice: "*Per ejusmodi assertiones rigidas et nimis strictas in rebus universis nequaquam eruuntur homines e luto peccatorum, sed in illud profundius quia desperatius demerguntur.*" (Lib. 4, p. 3.) In another place he says: "*Doctores theologi non debent esse faciles ad asserendum aliqua peccata mortalia ubi non sunt certissimi de re.*" Such, also, is the doctrine of St. Raymond: "*Non sis,*" says the saint, "*nimis pronus judicare mortalia peccata ubi tibi non constat per certam Scripturam.*" (L. 3, de Pœnit. s. 21.) St. Antoninus teaches the same: "*Quæstio,*" he says, "*in qua agitur utrum sit peccatum mortale vel non nisi ad hoc habeatur auctoritas expressa Scripturæ, aut Canonis ecclesiæ, vel evidens ratio, periculosissime determinatur.*" (Part. 2, tit. 1, c. 11, s. 28.) For, as the saint adds, he who, without some

of the above-mentioned grounds, pronounces an action to be a mortal sin, exposes souls to the danger of damnation : “*Ædificat ad gehennam.*” Speaking of the vain ornaments of women, the same holy archbishop says : “*Ex prædictis igitur videtur dicendum quod ubi in hujusmodi ornatibus confessor invenit clare et indubitanter mortale, talem non absolvat, nisi proponat abstinere a tali crimine. Si vero non potest clare percipere utrum sit mortale, non videtur tunc præcipitanda sententia (ut dicit Gulielmus specie in quadam simili,) scilicet ut deneget propter hoc absolutionem, vel illi faciat conscientiam de mortali ; quia faciendo postea contra illud, etiamsi illud non esset mortale, ei erit mortale, quia omne quod est contra conscientiam ædificat ad gehennam. Et cum promptiora sint jura ad solvendum quam ad ligandum (Can. Ponderet. dis. 1.) et melius sit Domino reddere rationem de nimia misericordia, quam de nimia severitate, ut dicit Chrysostomus (Can. Allegant 26, quæst. 7), potius videtur absolvendus et divino examini dimittendus.*” (Summa, par. 2, tit. 4, c. 5.) Sylvester holds the same opinion (verb. scrupulus) : “*Dico, secundum archiepiscopum, quod tuta conscientia potest quis eligere unam opinionem et secundum eam operari, si habeat notabiles auctores, et non sit expresse contra determinationem ecclesiæ,*” &c. The same is taught by John Nider, who, after stating the doctrine of William, says : “*Concordat etiam Bernardus Claramontensis dicens: si sint opiniones inter magnos dicentes quod peccatum est, alii vero dicunt quod non ; tunc debet consulere aliquos de quorum judicio confidit et secundum consilium discretorum facere et peccatum reputare vel non reputare. Ex quo enim opiniones sunt inter magnos, et ecclesia non determinat alteram partem, teneat quam voluerit, dum-*

modo iudicium in hoc resideat propter dicta eorum saltem quos reputat peritos." (Consol. an. timor. 3 p. c. 20.) This is conformable to the words of St. Thomas: "Qui ergo assentit opinioni alicujus magistri contra manifestum Scripturæ testimonium vel contra id quod publice tenetur secundum ecclesiæ auctoritatem, non potest ab erroris vitio excusari." (Quod. lib. 3, a. 10.) According to the Angelic Doctor, a person is excused from error when the opinion which he holds rests on good authority, and is not opposed to any clear passage of Scripture, or to any definition of the Church. Finally, the same doctrine has been laid down more clearly by Gabriel Briel, who flourished in the year 1480: "Prima opinio," he says, "videtur probabilior; quia nihil debet damnari tanquam mortale peccatum de quo non habetur evidens ratio vel manifesta auctoritas Scripturæ." (In 4. dis. 16, q. 4. concl. 5.)

St. Nilus relates that in the time of the Apostles Christ appeared in a vision to a bishop called Carpus and sharply rebuked him for using too great rigor towards penitents. (L. 2, epist. 190.)

But let us come to particulars, and examine how a confessor ought to treat persons who are in the proximate occasion of sin, and habitual sinners who relapse into any vice. With regard to those who are in the occasion of sin, we must first distinguish the various kinds of occasions.

An occasion of sin, we all know, is anything that naturally leads us to sin. This occasion may be either proximate or remote. The *remote* occasion is one in which people usually do not sin. The *proximate* occasion, on the contrary, is one in which people usually fall into sin. "In qua homines communiter ut plurimum peccant," says

St. Alphonsus. (L 6, tr. 4, n. 452.) Or it may be an occasion in which a certain individual will in all probability fall into sin.

There is therefore—1st. The *occasio proxima in se*; that is, one which is highly dangerous for all, as, for example, an immodest book or picture, the company of an immoral person, the visit to an infamous place, &c.

There is 2dly. The *occasio proxima per accidens*, that is an occasion in which a certain individual, through natural weakness, will almost certainly fall into sin. Such, for instance, is the bar-room for the drunkard, though it may not be such an occasion for all persons.

The proximate occasion of sin is either *voluntary* or *necessary*. It is *voluntary* when the sinner remains therein wilfully, though he could easily remove or avoid it.

It is *necessary*, “*si amoveri nequit sine gravi damno aut scandalo.*” (Praxis, Conf. n. 63.) The occasion is *physically* necessary when it is impossible to avoid it; for instance, a person in prison. It is *morally* necessary, when it cannot be avoided without sustaining a great loss; for instance, when one cannot avoid the occasion without losing his situation, or forfeiting his means of support, or abandoning his home, etc. The *occasio proxima* is *in esse* when it is in the very house in which one lives, and a positive act is required to remove it; for instance, if one has a bad book or picture or statue at home; if a man is a drunkard and sells liquor or keeps it in the house; if a man has a servant at home who is the cause of sin to him, etc. The occasion is *in non esse* if it is not in the house of the penitent, if all he has to do is to avoid it; for instance, the bar-room for the drunkard,

the company of a certain person for that young man, etc.

Principles and Applications.

1. *No one* is, strictly speaking, obliged to avoid the *remote* occasions of sin. To avoid every remote occasion is impossible: "*Alioquin debueratis de hoc mundo exiisse,*" says the Apostle. (I. Cor. v, 10.) Sometimes, however, one may be obliged to avoid even such occasions out of charity in order not to give scandal. 2. The proximate occasion of sin which is *voluntary* must be avoided and removed. He who does not avoid such an occasion is guilty of grievous sin; he is in the state of mortal sin. He is therefore certainly not disposed and he cannot be absolved. And why? Because he that wills the cause wills also the effect. "He that loves the danger shall perish in it." To expose one's self wilfully to the immediate occasion of sin is in itself a grievous sin. "*Potest aliquando absolvi, qui in proxima peccandi occasione versatur, quam potest et non vult omittere;*" is a proposition which has been condemned by Innocent XI. (61st.)

The same Pope has condemned the following propositions: 62. "*Proxima occasio peccandi non est fugienda, quando causa aliquis utilis aut honesta non fugiendi occurrit.*" 63. "*Licetum est quarere directe occasionem proximam peccandi pro bono spirituali vel temporali nostro vel proximi.*" There are, for instance, two keeping company. They have been keeping company for some time. They visit each other frequently. During these visits they commit grievous sins, in word, in thought, in desire, and sometimes by improper liberties. There is no likelihood of their marrying soon. What is to be done

with them? They must give up the company, or certainly cease those sinful liberties. Suppose, however, they intend to marry soon, say within half a year. Even in that case they must promise sincerely to abstain from every sinful liberty; or, if they are too weak and fall again and again, they must avoid each other, or, at least never to be alone together, until such time as they can marry. “*Raro evenit,*” says St. Alphonsus, “*quod tales sponsi non labantur saltem in verba aut cogitationes turpes; dum omnes aspectus et colloquia inter sponsores sunt incentiva ad peccandum estque moraliter impossibile ipsos invicem conversari et non sentire stimulos ad eos turpes actus qui tempore matrimonii succedere debent.*” (*Praxis, Conf. C. 3. N. 64*). “*Generaliter loquendo,*” he says elsewhere, “*de adolescentibus et puellis, qui invicem se adamant; quippe non sunt isti omnes indistincte de gravi culpa damnandi, sed ordinarie puto ipsos difficulter esse extra occasionem proximam lethaliter peccandi. Id nimia experientia patet; nam ex centum adolescentibus vix duo aut tres in occasione, a mortalibus inveniuntur immunes; et si non in principio, saltem in progressu. Tales enim adamantes prius conversantur invicem ob propensionem, deinde propensio fit passio; postquam radicem in corde fixerit, mentem obtenebrat, et eos in mille crimina ruere facit.*” (*Ib. No. 65*).

“We admonish all confessors,” says Cardinal Pico de Mirandola in one of his pastoral letters, “to withhold absolution from those who keep company of a licentious character, when such sinners, after having been duly warned thrice, either by the same or by different confessors (of which warnings they will take care to inform themselves), have failed to amend their conduct; signifying to

them that without a true reformation they may not hope for absolution from them or from any other. To render the practice of confessors uniform in this matter, as it ought to be in all others as well, we shall here briefly set down the cases of this sort, which more frequently occur, which are to be regarded as absolutely criminal; for just reasons we make use of the Latin language.

“1. Quodocunque ita fiat, etiam inter pares et causâ matrimonii, ut intercedant oscula, vel tactus, vel amplexus, vel delectationes morosæ, aut periculum labendi in quodvis grave peccatum.

“2. Quando fit inter eos qui sunt disparis conditionis propter scandalum et periculum mortaliter peccandi.

“3. Si fiat cum illis, cum quibus impossibile est contrahi matrimonium, ut sunt uxorati, claustrales et in sacris Ordinibus constituti, tum quia non potest cohonestari talis amor fine matrimonii, tum quia intercedit scandalum et periculum labendi in culpas lethales.

“4. Si fiat in Ecclesia, tum propter irreverentiam, tum propter periculum audiendi Sacrum sine debita attentione, tum etiam propter scandalum.

“5. Si adsit præceptum patris, vel matris aut tutoris, rationabiliter prohibens talem amorem; quia etiamsi reliqua sint honesta, filiifamilias et pupilli tenentur in re gravi, ut sine dubio hæc est, obedire parentibus vel tutoribus sub pœna peccati mortalis.

“6. Quando clàm fit et occultò, tum quia est expositus gravibus periculis et occasione proximæ graviter peccandi; tum quia, quando ita fit, regulariter exercetur contra voluntatem parentum, vel tutorum quibus filii vel pupilli obedientiam debent.

“7. Si tempore nocturno fiat, propter scandalum et periculum cadendi, etc.

“8. Si fiat sub prætextu honestæ recreationis et relaxandi animum, quia semper urget periculum et occasio proxima labendi ex longa mora in qua habentur colloquia, mutui aspectus, protestatio amoris, etc.

“9. Si eo modo fiat, ut ex se involvat periculum proximum osculorum, tactuum, etc. etiamsi aliunde ille amor esset licitè exercitus, quia est inter solutos et causâ matrimonii. Si, v. g. domi admittatur amasius, vel ita approximetur, ut nemo non videat adesse occasionem proximam tactuum, etc.

“10. Si amator vel amatrix animadvertat complicem amoris esse graviter tentatum; vel alterum urgere verbis turpibus aut alio modo ad inhonesta, etc. etiamsi alter complex nihil tentetur et nullam sentiat inclinationem ad peccandum; in quo casu erit utrique illicitus amor ille, propter periculum proximum delectationis et scandali activi in uno et passivi in altero, in quo graviter lædetur caritas erga proximum.

“11. Denique, universaliter loquendo, quotiescunque, ob causam amoris, amator vel amatrix frequenter labitur in aliquem gravem noxam, tunc amor induit rationem occasionis proximæ mali, et est omnino illicitus.”

You will often find young persons keeping company for months and years and yet never breathe a word of it in confession. Ask them why they never mentioned it before. “O,” they say, “I did not know it was necessary. The priest never asked me before.” It is, therefore, advisable to speak of this subject sometimes in the sermons and instructions and teach the people that those who are keeping company should speak of it to their confessor; this is especially necessary if the young man or young woman is not a Catholic. The Church is strictly opposed

to mixed marriages, and consequently to such company-keeping as leads to mixed marriages. It is also well, if one has reasonable doubts, to ask the penitent whether he or she is keeping company and how long. Is the young man or woman a Catholic? Has he made his first Communion? Is he willing to be instructed? How soon do they intend to marry? O, how many scandals, how many sins, how many mixed marriages might be prevented if every confessor questioned his penitents in time, and stopped the evil before it went too far! "*Principiis obsta, sero medicina paratur,*" &c. When the young couple are passionately in love with each other, it is too late to try to separate them. A conscientious confessor will not permit a young couple to begin company-keeping when they have no intention of marrying, at least not for several years. Company-keeping is in itself so dangerous that it can be tolerated only when one has the honorable intention of marrying soon. If the young couple intend to marry soon—say in a half a year or so—the confessor should warn them; they should not indulge in improper liberties; they should pray much and go often to the sacraments, and especially they should make haste and marry as soon as possible. Should the young couple fall repeatedly into grievous sins, the confessor can act safely according to the following principles: If the *occasio voluntaria* is *not* in esse, that is, not in the house, the penitent may be absolved the first time. He may receive absolution even the second time if he does not fall so often, and if he promises honestly to avoid the occasion, to keep away from the bar-room—from the person with whom he sinned, and so on; or at least if he is determined to make use of the necessary

means in order to avoid sin. This is the doctrine of St. Charles Borromeo (Act. Med.) and of St. Alphonsus. Should, however, the penitent continue to frequent the occasion of sin, or neglect to use the means prescribed by his confessor, or should he fall back into his old sins in spite of these means, he cannot be absolved, says St. Alphonsus (C. M. 454.), till he has given clear proof that he is in earnest. Such a sinner should not be absolved even the second time, if after confession, he falls back in precisely the same way; unless indeed he gives extraordinary signs of contrition. As a rule, the confessor has more reason to believe the promise of his penitent when the occasion is *not* in esse; as it is certainly far easier to keep away from the occasion of sin than to remove it when it is in the house. If the occasion of sin is *voluntary* and *in esse*, that is in the house, the penitent *cannot* be absolved, even the first time he comes, till the voluntary occasion is removed. The reason is because man is naturally so weak and the passion so strong, that it usually requires extraordinary efforts to remove the occasion which is loved with such tender affection. Moreover, the oftener the penitent falls into sin after confession, the more hardened he becomes. The abuse of grace renders his true conversion extremely difficult, nay morally impossible. Now, the confessor is the physician of souls. He must use every means in his power to keep his penitent from relapsing. Should the penitent promise to amend, but not see the necessity of removing the occasion of sin, the confessor will enlighten him with all patience and charity. “Qui amat periculum in illo peribit.” Should he promise to remove the occasion at some future time, but not at once, though he is able to do so,

the confessor will show him the necessity of acting promptly while he has yet the grace and strength to make the sacrifice. Should all these kind remonstrances be of no avail, it is evident the penitent is not disposed.

To this rule there are some exceptions. 1st. *If the penitent shows extraordinary signs of contrition*; shows that he has received special lights and graces from God, and that he really means to remove the occasion of sin at once. Such an extraordinary sign is, for instance, if the penitent comes during a mission. 2d. *If the penitent cannot return or can return only after a long time*. In such a case, if the absolution is deferred the penitent may be obliged to tell all his sins over again to another confessor, which is usually very difficult, or he may be obliged to confess to his own pastor or confessor and be in great danger of concealing some grievous sin. In this case the penitent, if disposed *hic et nunc*, may be absolved. "Sacramenta propter homines." 3d. *If the penitent cannot omit Communion without scandal or without injury to his good name*. We must not forget that, even in these cases, he cannot be absolved unless he is certainly disposed and firmly resolved to remove at once the voluntary occasion of sin. As for conditional absolution, it should be given only very rarely, especially if the sinner is a *formal* recidivus and has been instructed and warned again and again. If, however, the *occasion of sin* is not voluntary, but *necessary*, the following rules may be followed: In the *occasio proxima necessaria*, the penitent may be absolved whenever disposed. 1st. If there be a *real necessity* for going into the danger or for remaining therein. 2d. If it is not certain that the penitent will fall into mortal sin, and if he is not a formal recidivus. 3d.

If the penitent uses every means to keep himself from falling. He who is forced to remain against his will in the occasion of sin, and who uses every means in his power to avoid sin, may confidently hope for the especial assistance of God. There is a *moral necessity* : 1st. When the occasion cannot be removed without *endangering one's health* or *one's life*. 2d. When it cannot be removed without really sacrificing one's own good name or the good name of another. Those who are living in sin and who will not give up the occasion, usually excuse themselves by saying they will give rise to suspicion—and that they will cause scandal, or lose their good name and so on, if they send that person out of the house, or give up visiting that person. Such an occasion can be removed and avoided, however, without giving rise to suspicion or forfeiting one's good name. The penitent, for instance, may wait a week or two without absolution ; he can then send the person away without being noticed. Those who intend to marry soon may be said to be in a kind of necessary occasion. They must, however, use the means the confessor proposes to them—not visit too often, not remain alone, pray, go often to the sacraments, &c. If, however, they neglect these means, or sin in spite of them—their absolution must be deferred. The occasion may also be considered morally necessary, if it cannot be removed at once without causing *quarrels*, *hatred* or *public scandal*. If the husband, for instance, sends away the servant immediately after his confession, the wife will be apt to suspect something wrong, especially if she has already noticed that all was not right. The occasion may also be considered morally necessary, if it cannot be removed without suffering

some great temporal loss. If, for instance, one has to give up some important office or employment, as for example, a saloon-keeper, who is a drunkard, a person working in a shop or factory where immodest conversation is carried on, &c.

In all these cases the penitent may be absolved if *he sincerely promises to use the necessary means.* If, however, he falls again and again into his old sins and it is morally certain that he will continue to fall, he cannot be absolved until he has removed the occasion of sin, unless he shows extraordinary signs of contrition. This he must do, cost what it may; for a man must sacrifice even his life rather than lose his soul.

These principles also hold good, of course, when there is a physical necessity. From what we have said thus far it does not by any means follow that the confessor *must* always give absolution whenever he can. It is very often advisable to defer the absolution of those who are living in the immediate occasion of sin: 1st. In order to try their good will. 2d. To give them a greater horror of sin. 3d. To strengthen their good resolution. 4th. To make them more fervent, and more careful in using the necessary means. St. Alphonsus always follows the practice of delaying the absolution of such penitents, "*Si commode fieri potest, nunquam absolverem eum,*" he says, "*qui est in occasione proxima extrinseca, præsertim si occasio sit de materia turpi, semper ac absolutio commode differri potest.* (l. c. N. 456.) Elsewhere he says: "*Censeo confessarium non tantum posse, sed etiam teneri ad differendam absolutionem, semper ac commode fieri potest præsertim cum agitur de materia turpi.*" (H. et tr. ult. n. 7.) St. Alphonsus speaks thus not only of

those who are in the voluntary occasion of sin, but also of those who are in the necessary occasion, and even of those who give extraordinary signs of contrition. His object in so doing is to force the former to remove the voluntary occasion, and the latter to carry out the prescriptions of the confessor. "Forte in hoc quis me nimium rigidum reputabit," he continues, "sed ego semper sic me gessi in praxi, et sic pergam me gerere, et sic censeo magis prodesse pœnitentium saluti. Utinam omnes confessarii sic stiam se gererent! Quot peccata vitarentur, et quot salvarentur animæ!" (Prax. Conf. n. 69.) St. Alphonsus wishes that these principles should be applied especially to those who are living in the *necessary* occasion of sin. We should follow the milder opinion only when there is danger that the penitent will not go to confession any more. Of course, if the absolution cannot be *conveniently* delayed, and the penitent is disposed, he may be absolved. This practice may be followed in treating those who work in factories, &c. They may be even sometimes absolved without letting them receive communion so as to inspire them with a horror of sin.

Habitual and relapsing Sinners.

According to St. Alphonsus if a person commits external sins, such as pollution, drunkenness, and so on, *five* times a month, or other enormous sins, such as fornication, sodomy, etc., even once a month, such a person is a habitual sinner. A relapsing sinner is one who has *already confessed* the sin, has been *instructed* and *admonished* and yet falls back. He who has been in the habit of receiving absolution from an easy-going confessor, who never questioned, warned, or instructed him, is not a relapsing,

but merely a habitual sinner. Again, he who has been in the habit of sinning and who falls only after a long interval, is not a relapsing sinner. There are *two* kinds of relapsing sinners. 1st. He who relapses *materially*, that is, who falls again only after a long struggle. 2d. He who relapses *formally*, that is, who shows no amendment, who falls in the same way as before confession and who does not use the necessary means to avoid sin.

The habitual sinner may be absolved the first time he comes to confession, even though he has not yet actually broken off his sinful habits. The mere fact of going to confession, says St. Alphonsus, is a sign that the penitent is disposed; provided there is not some other positive proof to the contrary, as for example if there is a *formal* relapse. It is, however, often advisable to defer the absolution of such, especially if the habit is deeply rooted. Of course when there is a proximate occasion of sin the treatment must be entirely different. 2d. If the relapse is merely *material* the penitent may be absolved, and in fact should be absolved if possible, especially if he falls through natural frailty, such as in sins of anger, hatred, etc. The frequent reception of the sacraments is especially necessary for such. The Roman ritual says expressly: "In peccata facile recidentibus utilissimum fuerit consulere ut sæpe confiteantur, et si expediât, communicent." It is well, however, to refuse absolution occasionally to such, or at least to threaten them that they may conceive a greater horror of sin. Of course all this is to be understood again only of those who are not living in the immediate occasion of sin. If the relapse into sin is formal, the penitent should not be absolved till he gives actual proofs of amendment. He may be absolved, how-

ever, if he shows extraordinary signs of contrition. Such extraordinary signs are, according to the theologians, first, great compunction, manifested by tears or by words, proceeding not merely from the lips but from the heart. From expressions of this kind, we sometimes get more certainty of a penitent's fitness for absolution, than even from tears. Secondly, a considerable diminution in the number of sins, though the penitent was exposed to the same occasions and temptations. Thirdly, greater caution against relapses, by avoiding the occasions, and by practising the means prescribed ; or a great struggle made before consenting to sin. Fourthly, when the penitent asks, with a sincere desire of amendment, for new remedies or means of freeing himself from the sin. If he comes to confession, not to conform to any pious custom, such as going to the sacraments at Christmas, etc. ; not by the direction of a parent or master, but through a sincere desire of recovering the grace of God. This true contrition is especially manifest if the penitent has put himself to great inconvenience in order to come to confession, as for instance by making a long journey ; or if he has come, after a great struggle, or after doing great violence to himself. Fifthly, if he has been impelled to go to confession by a sermon, that he has heard on account of the sudden death, or some great calamity of a neighbor or friend ; or by any other extraordinary supernatural motive. Sixthly, if he confesses sins which he had previously concealed through shame. Seventhly, if the penitent shows that, by the admonition of the confessor, he has acquired new light, a new horror of his sins, and a new dread of the danger of being lost. Some theologians place, among the extraordinary signs of contrition, a firm

promise, made by the penitent, to practise the remedies prescribed by his confessor ; but unless there is some other sign, the confessor can seldom trust to such promises. For, in order to obtain absolution the more easily, some penitents make many promises which they are not firmly resolved to fulfil.

Whenever, then, there are such extraordinary signs, a confessor may absolve a relapsing sinner ; but he may also defer absolution for some time, when he knows that the delay will be profitable to his penitent. Some maintain that it is not always expedient to defer the absolution of a relapsing sinner who has the necessary dispositions : others teach that it is better to put off the absolution, unless the delay, and privation of communion should give others grounds of suspicion and should be injurious to the reputation of the penitent. My opinion is, as I have stated in my *Instructions to Confessors*, (cap. ult. s. 11,) that where there is no external occasion, and the sins are committed through internal frailty, (such as blasphemies, hatred, pollution, morose delectation, &c.) it is seldom expedient to defer absolution. For we may always hope for better fruit from the grace which the penitent receives from the sacrament, than from the delay of absolution. But when occasion is external, even though it be necessary, I deem it expedient to defer absolution, and in fact, it is, generally speaking, necessary to do so for the amendment of the penitent even though he is disposed at the time.

If the confessor has positive doubts about the disposition of the sinner he may absolve him *conditionally*, if there be an urgent necessity ; as, for instance in case of marriage and the like. The maxim : “Credendum est pœnitenti et pro et contra se dicenti,” does not always hold

good, especially in the case of *relapsing* and *habitual* sinners.

Pope Innocent XI has condemned the proposition: "If a penitent has the habit of sinning against the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church or the laws of nature, he should be absolved; and the confessor can neither put him off nor refuse him absolution, even though there appears no hope of amendment, provided said penitent assures the confessor that he is sorry and resolves to amend."

The confessor must, therefore, endeavor to find out the true state of the penitent's soul and ask him, for instance, how often he fell back since the last confession? Did he have the same sins to tell in past confessions? How long has the habit continued? Did the confessor warn, instruct and tell him the means of overcoming these temptations? Was he absolved each time? Did he pray and struggle against these temptations? Did he fall back immediately after confession? The confessor should also see whether the penitent is discouraged, tempted to despair, etc. If the confessor is obliged to defer or refuse absolution, he should do it, not rudely or harshly, but prudently and kindly. He should also be careful not to put off the penitent too long.

It is related in the life of St. Alphonsus, that this great saint and doctor of the Church was always filled with indignation against those confessors who repulse sinners. "Jesus Christ," said he, "always received them with kindness. Do not, then, repel them by too long delays, as is the custom of many. This is not the way to aid them, but to lead them to destruction. When the sinner acknowledges the evil of his state, and detests it, he must not be abandoned to his weakness; he must be assisted, and the greatest assistance is that of the sacraments. They help us

to do that which we cannot do ourselves. To defer absolution for entire months is the doctrine of the Jansenists. They do not care to inspire the faithful with love for the sacraments, but they render the sacraments useless to them. No doubt many sinners go to confession without being properly disposed. Now the way to inspire them with sentiments of repentance is to set before them the grievousness of sin, the offence that sin gives to God, the loss of heaven, and the torments that await them in hell. It is thus that the true charity of a confessor is manifested. There are some who wish to place sinners on the funeral pile, when they should hold out a helping hand to them." (Tannoja's Life of St. Alphonsus, vol. v, p. 112.)

The holy tribunal, as we have seen, has its dangers and difficulties. These dangers are more serious than some imprudent priests imagine. The good priest, however, is not discouraged by these dangers and difficulties. He knows that his divine Master has foreseen them all. He knows that the divine Master will strengthen his weakness. Let us trust in our Lord's wisdom and power and love. The dangers of the confessional, far from being fatal, or injurious, will, if we wish, turn to our spiritual advantage. "*Fidelis Deus, qui non patietur vos tentari supra id quod potestis, sed faciet etiam cum tentatione proventum.*" (1 Cor. x, 13.) How strange! Those cowardly priests who shirk the confessional, fear to be lost in an employment which is a continual exercise of the most heroic charity; and they see no danger for their salvation in a life dead, cowardly, and almost useless, in a life of cruel indifference to the eternal ruin of so many souls, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ! Let such cowardly priests confess frankly that the real cause of

their repugnance to the confessional, is that they have not courage enough to deny themselves. As self-denial is the distinctive characteristic of true sanctity, so assiduity in the confessional is the mark of true zeal.

Before entering the holy tribunal, the good confessor should enliven his faith and consider what he is about to do. God seems to reserve to himself the privilege of bestowing grace and glory. "*Gratiam et gloriam dabit Dominus*;" and yet he makes the confessor a sharer in this sublime privilege. Those whom the priest perceives around the confessional, remind him of the multitude of infirm persons that waited near the miraculous pond of Bethsaida in Jerusalem. "*Jacebat multitudo magna languentium*." (John v, 3.) He is going to perform a miracle far greater than that of the angel, who moved the waters of the pool to cure the corporal infirmities of him who descended first. The good confessor will not suffer one of these sinners, however inveterate his wounds, to complain with the paralytic: "*Hominem non habeo*," I have no one to help me in my misery. That he may have for all the compassion of a father, he is clothed with the charity of Jesus Christ. O what glory does he give to God! What joy to the guardian angels of these souls, and to Mary their mother! Far from dreading the hardships of the confessional, the good priest desires them. He compares his labor to that of the reaper, who is never more contented than when the harvest is abundant. Indeed, he must have a heart full of compassion, sweetness and patience! He is encouraged by the example of the good Master, whose place he holds. After the example of Jesus he takes on himself all the infirmities of his people. The more depraved he finds them, the more pity he feels for

them. The good priest unites his heart to that of Jesus Christ and offers to him all his labors and his sufferings. He knows what temptations beset the holy tribunal—annoyance, disgust, weariness, curiosity, rigorism, laxness, impure suggestions and so on. Satan does not give up without a struggle the souls that he has possessed. But the good priest is prepared for the combat. “*Jacula minus feriunt, quæ prævidentur.*” (St. Gregory, Hom. 35 in Evang.)

While hearing confessions, the good priest retains as much as possible his self-possession. He sacrifices himself for Jesus Christ and for his brethren. To maintain his fervor and to fulfil worthily a function so holy, the good priest never forgets the thought: “God sees me, God hears me, God judges me; what I do in secret, will one day be made known to the whole universe.” Is he overcome by weariness? He elevates his soul and renews the good intention. Does he discover the approach of the spirit of darkness? He redoubles his vigilance, and retires into the wounds of Jesus. “*Non inveni tam efficax remedium quam vulnera Christi; in illis dormio securus, et requiesco intrepidus.*” (St. Aug.) Does an unforeseen difficulty arise? Does he meet some sinner who resists the light, some patient who refuses the remedy? The good priest has recourse to God who can subdue, when it pleases him, the most rebellious will. “Help me, Lord, help me,” he cries. “I do thy work, but I cannot do it without thee.” He knows the value of these short and fervent prayers, so well called ejaculatory, because like inflamed arrows, they pierce the heart of God. At the same time that he encourages the patient, he questions him with prudence

and listens to him patiently. He studies the disposition of the penitent; he does his best to aid the operations of grace, and, although he wishes to conduct every soul to the degree of virtue to which God calls it, yet he will not discourage the weak by imprudent zeal. O how great is his joy when he sees sinners who have been long obstinate, yield at last to the invitations of the Holy Spirit! How happy he is when he can lead these prodigals to the embrace of their heavenly Father! If his zeal is baffled by some hardened sinner, he grieves indeed, but even his grief is a gain. Oh, no! he has not lost his time. That time is not lost in which we suffer for God. If the sinner is not absolved, he is not rejected. He has heard useful truths, his prejudices are lessened. He will carry away with him the remembrance of the charitable reception he has received. Pray, good priest; hope that grace will one day finish what it has begun. Be assured that you will be rewarded eternally for your efforts and your praiseworthy intentions.

When the good priest leaves the holy tribunal, he recollects himself a moment, and, as on entering he considered what he had to do, he now asks himself what he has done. Experience which is so valuable in the direction of souls, can be acquired only by reflecting on what we have done, and on the course we have adopted. In the commencement of the ministry especially, and after having heard many confessions, it is very important to ask one's self, "How have I received, aided and encouraged those who came to confession? What motives determined me to give, defer, or refuse absolution? Was such a decision according to the principles of moral theology? When correcting a penitent, did I let him see

that I suffered even more than he? Have I been sufficiently gentle, charitable and compassionate towards all? Was it the Holy Spirit that spoke through my lips? Was there anything too human in my language?

Having thus examined his conduct in the confessional, the good priest thanks the Lord for his favors, asks pardon for the faults he may have committed, and resolves to avoid them in future. He recommends to God the souls that have become yet dearer to him by the new bonds of charity that unite them to him. If pressing occupations prevent him from making the examination at the time, he will make it at the end of the day, and after quitting the confessional, will recite at least the prayer of the Church :

Actiones nostras, quæsumus, Domine, aspirando præveni, et adjuvando proseguere, ut cuncta nostra, oratio et operatio a te semper incipiat, et per te cœpta finiatur. Per Christum.

“ Oh, my God ! increase the piety, charity, justice, prudence and zeal of Thy ministers. Teach them the infinite value of the talent which Thou didst confide to them when Thou didst say : ‘ Accipite Spiritum sanctum ; quorum remisieritis peccata, remittuntur eis.’ Make them understand the crime they commit when they neglect to use the great power which thou hast delegated to them—the *power* of forgiving sins. By using this power well, the priest gives glory to thee, consolation to the Church, and saves numberless souls. Fill the hearts of the priests with a holy compassion for so many unfortunate sinners, who are perishing, and whom they could save, if they had a little more patience and charity. Show the priest with what paternal care Thou watchest

over the good priest who, for love of Thee, devotes himself to a function so painful, so crucifying to nature, and give them a glimpse of the rich crown which Thou hast reserved for the good priest in heaven."

In your preparation for Mass, and in your thanksgiving, offer to Jesus Christ sacrifice for sacrifice. He immolates himself for you. Immolate yourself for him by accepting for his glory the annoyances, the sufferings and the pains attached to the ministry of reconciliation.

NOTE FOR P. 143.

The sins of Onanism, feticide and infanticide have, in our time and country, become rather prevalent, even with a certain class of married Catholic men and women. It rarely happens that those who are guilty of these unnatural crimes, accuse themselves of these diabolical practices. Some of these persons may be in utter ignorance of the sinfulness of these practices: but it may be reasonably supposed that they do not remain long in such ignorance, and that the greater part of those who are guilty of these sinful acts are aware of their malice.

If then certain persons come to confession and the confessor has good reasons to suspect that they may be guilty of those sinful practices, he should question them in a discreet and delicate way on this subject, and on finding them guilty, he must not fail to instruct them properly and show them that no forgiveness of sins is possible until they renounce such sinful practices. This is the opinion of recent authors of Moral Theology.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRIEST MUST BE A JUST AND IMPARTIAL JUDGE.

The confessor is a judge, and the judgment that he exercises is that of God himself. St. Cyprian calls the decision of the priest "*anticipatum Christi judicium.*" Jesus Christ in the person of his minister pronounces now, by anticipation, the sentence that he will confirm when the soul appears before him at the hour of death. Two judgments await the sinner; the one in this life, at which the most touching mercy presides; the other in the next, where everything will be weighed in the balance of strict justice. Now, if the sinner wishes to avoid the tribunal of strict justice, let him approach humbly the tribunal of clemency. St. Jerome says also that the priests *judicant ante judicium*. St. Bernard prays that he may appear before God on the last day, *judicatus, non judicandus*. The sins forgiven in the tribunal of penance will remain forgiven at the judgment which follows death. The Lord will not reverse the judgment of his minister. *Non judicabit Dominus bis in idipsum.* (Serm. 2 in Circumc. Domini.) "Formam judicandi a terra sumit cælum," says St. Chrysostom. In considering this divine power, which has not been given to the angels, nor even to Mary, the most excellent of all creatures, St. Hilary exclaims: "O beatus cœli janitor, cujus terrestre judicium præjudicata sit auctoritas in cœlo, ut quæ in terris

aut ligata sint, aut soluta, statui ejusdem conditionem obtineant in cœlo ! The judgments of earth are respected in heaven. The decisions of the Church are the decisions of God himself. “Videte quid faciatis; non enim hominis exercetis judicium, sed Domini, et quodcunque judicaveritis, in vos redundabit ! (II Paral. xix, 6.) Oh, what zeal, what vigilance would animate the priest in the holy tribunal, if before entering he would always say to himself: I am about to pronounce the sentence of life or death, not for time, but for eternity ! Anticipatum Christi judicium. I am no longer a mere man. The power of remitting sins belongs by right to God. Jesus must live in me ; he must speak and act through me. As I represent the God of justice, how great must be my justice ; how careful must I be to judge according to the laws of the Church and the principles of theology. There is no acceptance of persons before God ; it should be the same with his ministers. Non est apud Deum nostrum iniquitas, nec personarum acceptio. (II Paral. xix, 7.) The good priest sees in all his penitents only souls to save. The souls of the poor are not less precious than the souls of the rich. If you are harsh and rigorous towards the poor, and weak and condescending towards the rich, where is your justice ? where is your impartiality. Oh, priest of God ! is it thus you represent him who is the Father of the poor ? In the tribunal of penance all human considerations, all distinctions of rank and fortune must disappear. Equality is evangelical law. (Col. iii, 4.) If any are to be preferred, it should be some poor mother of a family ; it should be the servant, the laborer, the poor tradesman, who has only a few spare moments, stolen from his work to give to religious

duties ; it should be the poor, the sick and those who stand most in need of our ministry. "Persons of quality," said St. Francis Regis, "are not in want of confessors ; the poor, the most abandoned portion of the flock of Jesus Christ shall be my portion." Be also careful not to waste too much time in the direction of certain souls to the detriment of others.

As a rule, it is very wrong for a confessor to bind his penitents to his tribunal. He must, on the contrary, give them full liberty to make their confession to any priest they choose and as often as they desire.

No doubt, there are some penitents who abuse this liberty by running from one confessor to another. So much the worse for them. But it is far worse for them and for the confessor if he tries to retain them at his tribunal, because he is thereby the cause of innumerable sacrileges, as his penitents are often ashamed to tell him all their sins. Let no confessor be so self-conceited as to imagine that his penitents never conceal anything from him, and that consequently he has a right to forbid them to confess to any one else. You will even find certain murderers of souls who receive their penitents with coldness and harshness, who even reproach them severely if they go to confession to another priest !

Poor penitents ! with what eagerness they take advantage of a mission to set their conscience at rest and to recover that peace to which they have so long been strangers !

If you take a lively interest in one of the other sex, especially if you feel over-zealous for her salvation, be on your guard ; check this impetuous zeal. Spread cold ashes over this fire. It will not be less pure for being

covered. Abstain from all expressions of endearment. They are not necessary, and may do great harm. Reserve these expressions of interest and affection for the poor beggar, for the humble mechanic, for the ignorant peasant, for the poor prodigal. They will appreciate them; they will thank you for them; they will never forget them. Let us say with St. Paul: "*Sapientibus et insipientibus debitor sum.*" (Rom. i, 14.)

CHAPTER XI.

THE SPIRIT OF ST. ALPHONSUS—HIS MORAL THEOLOGY.

It is not without a special design that God places each of his saints on the theatre of this world at one epoch rather than another. In the divine economy, nothing is abandoned to chance. Whenever the Church approaches a crisis, and seems menaced with defeat, God gives a saint to earth. And such a saint—in himself alone a magnificent gift of Providence—is invariably endowed by Heaven with the graces peculiarly necessary at that precise moment for the healing of the world and the victory of the Church.

Against Arianism God raised up an Athanasius, a Hilary of Poitiers; to counteract Roman decadence God sent St. Benedict and his legions of toiling monks; to the hypocritical poverty of the Manichean Albigenses God opposed the sincere and most magnificent poverty of Francis of Assisi; the verbosity of heretics he neutralized by the eloquence of St. Dominic and the science of St. Thomas Aquinas; against the perpetual militia of Protestantism the soil of Catholicity sprouts forth the standing armies of St. Ignatius and St. Vincent de Paul.

Finally, and to come to our subject, in a century, on a day in which the Christian world was in danger of becoming Jansenist, when Mercy and Joy were banished, as foreign, from almost every country and every hearth; when confessors armed themselves with iron

sternness against weak and shuddering sinners; when frequent Communion began to be regarded as an impossibility, if not a crime; when the heretics would gladly have effaced from our Sacred Books, whose every page they replenish and illuminate, the words *gaudium et lætitia*; at the critical period between the seventeenth century which began universal secularization, and the eighteenth, which was about to consummate it, God sent into the world a saint destined to take Mercy and Joy by the hand and render them victorious in every Christian household; a saint who would rob confessors of the heavy armor which hindered their hearts from beating, and rendered their arms powerless to embrace sinners; a saint who was to make frequent Communion the cherished practice of new Catholic generations; who would love, and cause others to love, the words *joy* and *gladness*, and would make Sweetness, Unity and Love triumph for a long time, perhaps forever!

Who this saint is, you may easily conjecture. It is St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, who was born September 27, 1696, and died August 1, 1787, aged ninety years, laden with virtues and glittering with miracles. It is of him we are going to speak.

A prince of the Holy Roman Church, one of the glories of France in the Sacred College, His Eminence Cardinal Villecourt, has been struck by the great deeds of our saint. "Behold," he exclaims, "the vanquisher of two centuries, the conqueror of the great heresy of Jansenism!"

Indeed, St. Alphonsus was, in a peculiar manner, the destroyer of Jansenism. Such is, undoubtedly, his true character; and it is under this aspect alone that we will consider him.

I. St. Alphonsus was gifted with a most ardent temperament, and expressed his thoughts with a happy vivacity. More than once he turned the fire of his eloquence against the Jansenist sectaries: "That reunion which took place at Bourg Fontaine was less an assembly of men than of demons." And again: "WHAT GOOD HAVE THE FRENCH JANSENISTS EFFECTED BY MAKING GOD APPEAR LIKE A TYRANT?"

These words showed the fixed sentiments of our Saint, and he was not among those who change their fixed sentiments every day. But previous to refuting these heretics in his books he had already refuted them by his acts. The most beautiful *treatise against Jansenism* is the life of St. Alphonsus!

Scarcely had he been admitted to Holy Orders when the ruling passion of his life became manifest with all its ardor, with all its enthusiasm,—his passion for great sinners. He put himself in their way; he met them everywhere; he went after the most wretched; he called them, he heard their confession, he absolved them. "He could not endure," says Cardinal Wiseman, "those confessors who received their penitents with a discouraging, supercilious air, or who, having heard them, sent them off disdainfully, as unworthy and incapable of the divine mercy." His whole life was a protest against proceedings of this nature, and at the close of his career he could use these magnificent words, which are the confirmation of his glory, and which ought to be written in letters of gold: "I DO NOT REMEMBER THAT I EVER SENT AWAY A SINNER WITHOUT ABSOLUTION."

In fact, the great honor of St. Alphonsus is that he restored Mercy to its true place in the Church. God had

been regarded as a sort of tyrant, harsh and terrible, before whom men trembled, pale, ghastly, devoured by fear. Our saint annihilated these unworthy representations, dangerous and stupid pictures, which distorted the lineaments of the real God. He has shown us what is truly the Divine aspect; he has pointed out Jesus weeping over sinners, and lovingly extending his arms towards them. The Jansenists suppressed the Paternity of God. St. Alphonsus is among those who have restored to him his character of Father,—that is to say, his goodness.

And when, later on, our saint took up his pen, his doctrine was not at variance with his practice. In his *Praxis Confessarii*, the great Bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths lays it down that the confessor is at once a *father*, a *physician*, a *teacher*, and a *judge*. Well, the slow-going, procrastinating Jansenists would not agree to all this. Here is a great sinner, who, with trembling knees and shame-stricken countenance, comes to make an agonizing confession of twenty or thirty years of infamy. “Will you,” asks the Saint, “terrify him, and turn him off from month to month, according to the present régime? No, no; it is a Jansenist doctrine thus to defer absolution.” And with a countenance almost terrible, the Saint adds: “It is not, then, difficult to say to some one, ‘Go, you are damned; I cannot absolve you.’ But if we consider the value of the Blood of Jesus Christ, we should hold such conduct in abhorrence!” Thus speak the saints; those who have least need of mercy for themselves dispense it most freely to their brothers. Being true physicans, they do not say to the sick, “Wait; in some days I may dress your bleeding wounds.” Being true fathers, they say not, “Wait; in some months I shall open my arms to embrace

my repenting son." Being true teachers, they do not refuse to give decisions and leave poor souls to perish in the dark. Being true judges, they do not inflict on the accused a horrible suspense, broken by sobs and watered with tears. The Jansenists, in being very severe, imagined themselves very wise; but what good did they do? What use to say to penitents, "Come back to-morrow." The penitents did *not* come back. They made humanity loathe pardon by selling it so dear; and peace, by being so tardy in bestowing it.

I know that some will object to us the *probabilism* of St. Alphonsus; they will affirm that he sinned by an excess contrary to that of the Jansenists: *they* were too rigid, *he* was too lenient. St. Alphonsus, with an elevation of principle which is well known, a thousand and a thousand times proclaims that "it is always necessary to act with moral certitude." He contents himself with adding that, "of two probable opinions, one is not obliged to adopt the more severe." Is this, then, laxity? Or do you prefer the Jansenist proposition? "Some commandments of God are impossible to man?" Morose and austere as they are, the Jansenists point out the way of salvation, but they strew it with difficulties almost insurmountable—angular stones, sharp blades and burning coals—all these must be encountered.

"My brother," says a sweet voice, "commence by walking in the path before you; it is uneven, stony, rough, but you *can* tread it, and you will even find thereon some flowers which the goodness of God scatters to cheer you with their beauty and perfume. Later on, you may enter more difficult ways, but you must not despair in the beginning. God is good!" Thus speaks St.

Alphonsus, and man takes courage. "Acting always with moral certainty," but "not always adopting the more rigid sentiment," he has confidence in mercy, he experiences some joy, he looks hopefully towards God. And, not only does he attain salvation, but often goes farther, and acquires perfection. This is the work of our Saint, of his writings, of his actions. Still more, he has been the consoler of desolate humanity.

II. Alphonsus has triumphed ; he has made the confessional a consolation ; he has installed therein goodness instead of indignation ; in a word, he has installed therein the Father. But his mission is far from being fulfilled. In our churches reigns a timid, or rather affrighted, silence ; eyes are no longer lifted to the altar ; the Eucharistic Majesty is dreaded. Once a year the faithful are admitted, after a protracted and austere preparation, to approach the terrible altar ; once a year the banquet of the Celestial Father is spread before them ; once a year they receive their God. During the remainder of the year they can only remember him, or expect him. Mothers in tears cannot unite themselves to the Consoler of their sorrows ; sinners cannot more frequently draw from the tabernacle the strength their weakness often needs ; the children cease to remember the Eucharist. On the door of the tabernacle, the icy and implacable finger of Jansenism had written : "Love is not permitted to descend into the hearts of men oftener than once a year."

Arnauld's book on *Frequent Communion* has accomplished a mischief that nothing can undo. It has plunged Catholic souls into a lethargy—these souls that God has created to be everlastingly awake. The very movements of our hearts are arrested by the chilling touch of Jansenism.

Hearts must not beat, love must not appear ; fear, terror, awe—these alone are authorized. Mercy no longer dwells on our altars ; a terrible God is enthroned on them, always ready to hurl his thunderbolts. Frightful doctrines, which Alphonsus alone was able to undermine.

This great man enters our churches ; with energetic zeal he opens a passage to the altar ; he ascends the steps ; a finger is lovingly pointed towards the tabernacle, and a powerful voice cries out to all Christian people, “ Come, come ; Love suffers strangely from your absence ; Love is alone.” Then they come. The beautiful books of our Saint have reassured all souls. And these are in some manner only the echoes of all the words of the saints. Alphonsus is in perfect accord with St. Charles Borromeo and with St. Vincent de Paul ; with Popes, with Councils, with Jesus Christ above all. He has expanded, he has dilated souls. Our hearts are more vast since his day. A moment ago, we said that he had raised Mercy to its rightful position among men ; the same he has done with Love.

Who can sum up the incomparable prayers, the effusions of love, the crimes prevented, the virtues acquired or preserved, through the influence of our Saint ? It is by hundreds of thousands that he has augmented communions ; it is, then, by hundreds of thousands that we must count up the wonders of purity, innocence and virtue which he has really produced in the world of souls.

III. There are certain men who, closing their eyes on the sun of our earth, can bear themselves this magnificent testimony : “ I have always loved what is great.” Well, on the bed of death, every Jansenist may say, on the contrary, “ I have always loved what is little.” I can-

not imagine a Jansenist having an elevated thought. We have seen them dry up among men the sources of Mercy and Love. Nor did their harsh anger stop here ; as regards another life, they must dry up the sources of Salvation. Their hideous doctrine of grace drove Love not only from earth, but from heaven ; so that poor, stolid humanity, with tearful eye and riven soul, knew not where to find it. “ Jesus Christ did not die for *all* men,” say the Jansenist murderers of Love ; “ God wills to save only the predestined, and these are necessitated to do right, since man cannot resist the interior grace.” Here my heart rebels, my anger is enkindled. Such were the doctrines proposed to the Christians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ! And we are astonished that they became disgusted with such odious principles ! We are astonished that humanity, to whom the smile of Mercy, the smile of Love, the smile of Hope, were interdicted, became Jansenist or revolutionary ! I am no longer amazed at the excesses of the National Assembly, since I see so many Jansenists on its benches. Still less am I surprised at the excesses of the Revolution, since among its terrible actors figure so many ancient Jansenists. These men had hearts of steel ; their actions were eloquent of the fatalism and despair of their doctrines !

Well, whom does God cause to sprout up from the Christian soil to restore to men the hope of a more easy and universal salvation ? Who will become the consoler of wretched humanity, and open anew the beautiful paths to beatitude ? It is still St. Alphonsus Liguori. He begins by laying down the principle that “ God wills, with a true and sincere will, that all should be saved, and none lost ;—that Jesus Christ died for ALL men.” Then

in his memorable book entitled, *The Great Means of Prayer*, he establishes incontestably that “*God, willing the salvation of all men, has given to each the graces necessary to obtain it.*” If he fails to give the efficacious grace, he at the least gives the *sufficient grace* of being able actually to pray. And by prayer *every one can obtain the efficacious grace to fulfil the law and work out his salvation.* The most culpable of the damned, had he wished to profit by the grace of prayer common to all, would have obtained by prayer the requisite strength, and *would have been saved.*

Ah! at last I breathe freely. No longer is hope crushed within me. I see heaven peopled; I see the ways of salvation frequented; I see that God is good. I can still throw myself on my knees; God is not miserable. Away with these odious Jansenist crucifixes, whose arms are so contracted! I desire wider arms; I must have immense arms, capable of enclosing all the sinners in the world. Give me the Jesus Christ of St. Alphonsus, not him of Arnould and Saint-Cyran!

IV. A phenomenon which has always seemed strangely surprising to me is, that all revolutionists have been passionately attached to the Jansenists, and passionately beloved by them. It is nevertheless certain that the Jansenists were the most intolerant, morose, and illiberal of sectaries. It is equally true that we Catholics defended against them all human liberties, and, at the same time, the cause of Love, Hope, and Mercy. But the Jansenists were rebels; that suffices for our adversaries. And, above all, they were enemies of the Holy See; that explains everything. It cannot now be a matter of surprise to see among our opponents Michelet and Nicoli, the *Sicèle*

and the *Provinciales*, the socialists even, with Saint-Cyran and Arnauld. All rebellions are connected, and are true to one another.

Not satisfied with effacing from the world all ideas of love, goodness, and hope, the Jansenists wish also to blot out the idea of unity. They were the most ardent and the most dangerous of all Gallicans. This fact is so notorious that it is unnecessary to demonstrate it anew. We may add that the Jansenists managed their revolt well. Yes, during two centuries a school existed in the bosom of the Church which affirmed that "a Council is above the Pope;" in other words, that the members are superior to their head, and can assume its peculiar functions. Yes, during two centuries certain theologians used their best efforts to annihilate the idea of Infallibility,—an idea which is the grandest honor of the human race; for, as the good Bishop of Tulle said, "man is so great that he must have for his guidance on earth a perpetual Infallibility; and each of our little ones has a right to say to his master: 'Do not deceive me; be infallible.'" For two centuries has been exhibited the strange spectacle of a crowd kneeling before the Roman See, and crying out to the Sovereign Pontiff: "We see in you the Vicar of Jesus Christ, but a most fallible Vicar—perpetually fallible, necessarily fallible." Yet the Jansenists dared to assert that they preserved Catholic unity. Yes, after the fashion of a branch which, though lopped off, still holds on to the tree by some vegetative fibres, receiving just enough of sap to save it from immediate death, and which droops mournfully, with its withering leaves, from a tree always green, always beautiful, always living.

The idea of Infallibility, the idea of Unity, had all but

disappeared from earth when St. Alphonsus came. It has been remarked that he was by excellence the saint of the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope; it may be said with as much reason, or more, that he was also the saint of Unity. "The Declaration of the French Clergy in 1682 was as a thorn that pierced his heart." But do not many maintain in these days that Gallicanism was the distinctive sign, the essential adornment, of all great minds, and that we have nothing to oppose to their celebrity? What? Is not St. Alphonsus, in a literary point of view, equal to the most celebrated of the Jansenists, the most illustrious Gallicans? Listen! His sweet voice is changed into thunder when he vindicates the rights of the Pope. He styles him the Prince, the King of Theology, *theologicæ princeps*; the Governor, the Moderator of the whole Church, *Ecclesiæ moderator*; the Preserver and Supreme Defender of divine truth among men, *divinæ veritatis conservator et vindex*; the Sovereign Judge of all doctrinal controversies, *unus controversiarum Iudex*, the Universal Doctor, and Infallible Interpreter of the Divine Will.

And since the days of Alphonsus—thanks to him—these epithets are common on the lips of all Catholics. He has trampled on Gallicanism as on Jansenism; he has been doubly triumphant. And to come to the natural result of what has been said, he has restored Unity to the world, having previously restored to it Mercy, Love, and Hope.

V. His task was not as yet completed. There was a joy still wanting to the Christian world; the Blessed Virgin had too poor a place in liturgical invocations, in prayer, in the heart. The Jansenists professed a particular horror of the Immaculate Conception; they obstinately in-

sisted that there were some stains on the whiteness of this mystic swan. Mary being thus almost entirely riven from the devotion of humanity, joy disappeared, for, as our liturgy says, it is the Virgin who announces joy to the whole universe : *gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo*. St. Alphonsus perceived this danger as he had perceived all the others, and he undertook to restore to the Mother of God the glories of which Jansenist hands had robbed her. God worked with him, and glorious miracles gave to his doctrine a supernatural consecration. In presence of thousands of spectators, Our Lady more than once appeared to vindicate her own cause. And Alphonsus was encouraged to proclaim boldly and distinctly the Immaculate Conception of the Co-redemptrix of the human race,—to cry out always and everywhere that “all graces come through the hands of Mary.” Now let us open our ears and eyes. What language do all Christians hold of the Blessed Virgin but the language of St. Alphonsus ? Has not the dogma of her Immaculate Conception, so dear to him, been solemnly defined ? Have not his works on the Mother of God become standard ? Our Saint triumphs.

The Jansenists had acquired, even in the bosom of the family, an influence truly deplorable. They drove out joy. We know what Jansenist education meant. The little children were sternly treated. They must not jest, or laugh too loud, or show their pretty little teeth in smiles. They were forced to submit to sacrifices, which, to be meritorious, must be voluntary and free. Their parents rarely mingled with them, *elonginquo auctoritas*. Their home was gloomy. The feasts of Our Lady and the saints were diminished in number. The little ones were taught to enter a church with fear and trembling, *pavete*

ad sanctuarium meum ; their sweet little eyes must not presume to wander towards the tabernacle. Such an education, I tell you, was cold, dismal, and desolate.

The doctrine of St. Alphonsus has yet to triumph in the family, where a better education has replaced the Turkish system of the Jansenists. To-day we are in the opposite extreme. We make our children our companions, the Jansenists wished us to make them our slaves. Between these two extremes is true Christian education, grave but cheerful, austere but joyous, paternal and maternal ; roars of laughter mingled with noble teachings, plays with lessons. St. Alphonsus has not yet wholly triumphed over the false austerity, the gloom of the Jansenists. But he who has brought back among us love, hope, and goodness will assuredly restore to us joy. Melancholy was regarded in the Middle Ages as the eighth capital sin ; joy is a great virtue, and the Church incessantly says to us : *Rejoice ; again I say to you, rejoice.*

VI. It is especially the priest who ought to rejoice in the doctrine of St. Alphonsus taught in his moral theology. "There are," says the Rev. Joseph Mach, S. J., "many works treating of moral theology ; but none of them is equal to the moral theology of St. Alphonsus. His moral theology has been explained and commented on in a masterly manner by Neyraguet, Scavini, Gousset, Gury, Konings, Marc and other able theologians ; it is of great authority and highly deserves to be studied well. There are several reasons which recommend it in the highest degree.

"(1) *The holiness of the author.* Pope Pius VII, called him 'Sanctissimum Antistitem., Pius VIII called him 'Illustre episcoporum decus.' Leo XII called him 'Virum sanctissimum itemque doctissimum.'

“ Besides these testimonials of the author’s sanctity, we have other proofs of his sanctity,—namely, the heroic virtues which he practised in the course of his life. All his writings, so highly edifying, testify to his sanctity. Other authors enlighten the mind and speak to the intellect; but St. Alphonsus not only enlightens the mind, but he also speaks to the heart and sanctifies it.

“(2) Another reason why the moral theology of St. Alphonsus should be studied in preference to all others is the long experience of the saint. Nothing can be of greater importance for a seminary and a diocese than to have prelates and professors who, like Jesus Christ, have been ‘tentati per omnia.’ It will be difficult for a professor of moral theology or a prelate to be a competent teacher if he has not exercised the ministry during a long time. He who has no practical knowledge of its difficulties and trials may give splendid theories, but these theories cannot be followed in practice; and thus it happens that the young theologian who seems to be very well versed in theology hardly knows anything of moral theology. But this cannot be said of St. Alphonsus. He was a missionary priest for more than forty years. He exercised the sacred ministry up to his ninety-second year. During all that time he was faithful to his vow never to lose time. There are but few men that have been so very active for so long a time and in a manner so indefatigable; still smaller is the number of those who, like St. Alphonsus, have delivered to posterity the precious fruits of their apostolic zeal. What a happiness to have for our guide a teacher of so long and so consummate an experience!

“(3) A third reason which recommends in so high a degree the moral theology of St. Alphonsus is derived from

the fruits which it produces. Those who follow the doctrine of this saint convert and sanctify many souls. How many sinners who made their confession to a priest of the school of this great Bishop have exclaimed, in the transport of their joy, ‘O my Father, if I had met sooner with a priest like you, I would not have stayed away from confession for twenty, thirty years!’ Hence Cardinal Sanfelice says in his synodal statutes: “Experience proves that the more closely a confessor follows the opinions and practices of St. Alphonsus in the confessional, the more abundant are the fruits he will gather.” (Syn. Dioc. pcap. June, 1882. Cap. v., sec. ix.)

“4. St. Alphonsus’ doctrine is a ‘*cursus completus*’ of moral theology which it is safe in conscience to follow; for all those who composed the Sacred Congregation, after having examined it more than twenty times, according to the wise rules of Urban VIII and Benedict XIV, have unanimously declared ‘*voce concordi, unanimi consensu, una voce, una mente,*’ that the doctrine of St. Alphonsus does not contain anything worthy of censure, ‘*nihil censura dignum.*’

“5. St. Alphonsus’ moral theology is approved by the Holy See. When the question ‘*Utrum sacræ Theologiæ professor opiniones, quas in sua Theologia Morali profitetur S. Alphonsus a Liguorio, sequi tuto possit ac profiteri?*’ was proposed to the Sacra Penitentiaria, the answer was given in the affirmative (5th July, 1831). What was still wanting to our holy author was the title of Doctor of the Church, and Pope Pius IX, of immortal memory, bestowed this title upon him.

“6. Even the number of opinions of authors quoted and explained by St. Alphonsus are precious helps for an

able confessor and professor. The great Doctor of the Church thus shows his deep humility, and condemns the detestable pride of those presumptuous theologians who wish to be considered as men speaking "ex cathedra," and on that account desire to force their opinions and decisions upon others and despise the opinions of standard authors. Hence it is that those who pretend to simplify the theology of St. Alphonsus by leaving out the opinions of grave authors whom he quotes, render, without willing it, little honor to science and to the virtue of the saint, and are of sad service to a professor of theology, because they deprive him of powerful helps which this science furnishes, in order to decide most difficult cases with success.

"Ah! let us thank divine Providence for having given us, in St. Alphonsus, such a good angel and safe guide in the difficult science of moral theology." (*Le Trésor du Prêtre.*)

The Rev. Father Joseph Mach, S. J., was a truly apostolic man. He spent twenty-nine years in giving missions. It was only after so many years of apostolic labors that he wrote those most just praises concerning St. Alphonsus' moral theology. To these praises we add those of Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII.

"7. Pope Pius IX, in his Brief of July 7th, 1871, in which he confirms the title of 'Doctor Ecclesiæ' which he had bestowed upon St. Alphonsus in his Decretum Urbis et Orbis dedie 23. Martis 1871, says, among other things, 'Quæ cum ita sint, . . . Auctoritate Nostra Apostolica, tenore presentium, titulum Doctoris in honorem S. Alphonsi Mariæ de Liguorio . . . confirmamus, seu, quatenus opus sit, denuo ei tribuimus, impertimus, ita qui-

dem, ut in Universali Catholica Ecclesia semper Is Doctor habeatur. . . . Præterea hujus Doctoris Libros, Commentaria, Opuscula, Opera denique omnia, ut aliorum Ecclesiæ Doctorum, non modo privatim, sed publicè in Gymnasiis, Academiis, Scholis, Collegiis, Lectionibus, Disputationibus, Interpretationibus, Concionibus, Sermonibus omnibusque aliis Ecclesiasticis studiis Christianisque exercitationibus, citari, proferri, atque, cum res pustulaverit, adhiberi volumus et decernimus.’ ”

LETTER OF OUR HOLY FATHER POPE LEO XIII,
CONCERNING THE WRITINGS OF ST. ALPHONSUS
MARIA DE LIGUORI, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH.

To Our Beloved Sons Leopold Joseph Dujardin and Jules Jacques, Priests of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

LEO PP. XIII.

BELOVED SONS, HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BLESSING :

Although the writings of the holy Doctor Alphonsus Maria de Liguori have been already spread throughout the whole world, not without the greatest profit to the Christian cause, yet, beloved sons, it is to be wished that they become still more and more popular, and be brought into the hands of all ; for with the greatest skill he adapted the truths of Catholic faith to the capacity of all ; he directed and promoted the moral training of all ; he excited in a marvellous manner the piety of all ; and “ to those who were wandering in the mist of the world he pointed out the way by which, being delivered from the power of darkness, they might pass into the light and

kingdom of God." With sound and most solid arguments, too, did he raise a bulwark for divine revelation against Deists ; he strenuously defended the truth of our faith ; he maintained most efficaciously the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God ; he courageously contended for the primacy and infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff ; he learnedly and piously illustrated the plans of Divine Providence in procuring the salvation of men through Jesus Christ ; he explained the Psalms and Canticles by commentaries most fitted to warm the piety of the clergy ; he showed the glory of the Church in the triumphs of the martyrs ; by his history of heresies and his dogmatic treatise he sharply confuted all heresies, but especially the errors of Jansenius and Febronius, which were the most prevalent, and which were pregnant with that brood of monstrous opinions by which the very foundations of religious and civil society are now being shaken. These errors he attacked with such perspicacity, that most of the *propositions* which a century later were condemned in the *Syllabus* may be found already explicitly refuted in his writings. Indeed, "it may with perfect truth be asserted that there is no error of our times which has not, for the main part at least, been refuted by Alphonsus."

"And to say nothing of his *Moral Theology*, so very celebrated throughout the world, and which gives a most safe standard which directors of consciences may follow, the saint, by means of his many learned ascetic treatises, as by so many sparks of fire, enkindled charity which was growing cold, and fed and increased its flame ; and especially with a wonderful benefit to the faithful warmed even the most hardened hearts with love towards Our

Lord Jesus Christ and his most sweet Mother. And in all these labors "this is especially worthy of remark that, though he wrote most copiously, yet it became evident, after a diligent examination of his writings, that they may be all perused by the faithful without any danger of stumbling.

"We congratulate you, then, beloved sons, that you have translated into French all the dogmatic and ascetic writings of your most holy and learned Father, which he composed either in Latin or in Italian; and this both because the French language, being known to almost all nations, will spread more widely the fruit of the labors of the illustrious Doctor, and also because the difficult task has been committed to you, on whom even otherwise it was incumbent to write on the nature, learning, and holiness of his works, and who as his sons could more easily and more fully than others follow the spirit of your Father.

"And, further, we also congratulate you on your undertaking for this reason that, since the holy author frequently in his writings boasts that he has followed the teaching of the Angel of the Schools, from this homage of a later Doctor of the Church a new praise and glory are cast on the teaching of St. Thomas; and thus a fresh approbation is given to that renewal of Christian philosophy, according to the mind of the Angelic Doctor, which we, by our recent Encyclical Letters, most urgently sought to promote.

"We, therefore, presage a most ample success for your recent edition of the works of St. Alphonsus, and one which will correspond with our desires and yours; and meantime, as a token of God's favor and a proof of our

paternal benevolence, we lovingly grant to you, beloved sons, and to the whole Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, our Apostolic Benediction.

“Given at Rome, at St. Peter’s, the 28th of August, 1879, in the second year of our Pontificate.

“LEO PP. XIII.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE ZEAL OF THE PASTOR FOR THE SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT OF HIS FLOCK. (SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.)

Our divine Saviour Jesus Christ asked St. Peter three times in succession, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" To these questions St. Peter answered, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." To this answer of St. Peter, our Lord replied, "Feed my lambs." From this answer of our dear Saviour it is clear that Peter was to show his love for his divine Master by feeding faithfully Christ's flock; that is, by leading the faithful to a life of sanctity by means of his prayers, example, and exhortations. This is the duty of every pastor of souls. "The faithful discharge of this duty," says St. Alphonsus, "is a work extremely pleasing to God, for the Lord values and loves a perfect soul far more than a thousand imperfect souls."

An emperor values and loves most that one of a thousand likenesses of his which represents him most perfectly. In like manner, God loves the soul in which his likeness shines forth most perfectly, a thousand times more than a thousand souls which resemble him less perfectly. Hence it is that every truly enlightened pastor of souls applies himself to the spiritual progress of his flock *in such a manner*, just as if he were not accountable to God for anything else.

As many souls as he has advanced in the road of perfection, so many never-fading crowns shall he receive in

heaven as a reward for his trouble. It is related of St. Aldegundis, that one day she saw, in a vision, St. Amandus surrounded by a multitude of holy souls, who had been converted by him; he was among them like a giant surpassing them in statue and heavenly glory; all looked up to him as to their spiritual director and father, offering to him the crowns they had received. With the great Apostle St. Paul such a pastor can exclaim: "What is our hope, our joy, our crown of glory? Are not you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy." (Thessal. ii, 19.)

"But," says a priest, "it is very difficult to draw souls to God and lead them to perfection."

"This is indeed a difficult task," says St. Francis de Sales. "God alone can, by his grace, draw souls to a supernatural life. 'No man can come to me,' says Jesus Christ, 'except the Father who hath sent me draw him.' (John vi, 44.) Now God makes use of various means and ways to draw souls to love and serve him. He generally uses, for this purpose, the ministry of his priests. This is a great honor for priests. "Hence it is," says St. Francis de Sales, "that the Fathers of the Church, in spite of their numerous occupations, never declined to charge themselves with the direction of several souls who wished to be under their guidance. Even the apostles, amidst the general harvest of the world, picked up certain chosen ears of corn with a special affection. We know that Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Onesimus, St. Thecla and St. Appia were the dear disciples of the great St. Paul, as St. Mark and St. Petronella were the disciples of St. Peter. And has not St. Paul written one of his canonical epistles to the devout lady Electa?"

“ It is painful, I confess, to direct souls in particular ; but it is a pain that gives a comfort like that which is felt by the laborers in the harvest and vintage, who are never better pleased than when they have most to do and when their burdens are very heavy. To direct souls is a labor which refreshes and revives the heart by the sweet delights it brings to those who are engaged therein. It is said that when the tigress finds one of her whelps which the huntsman leaves in the way to amuse her, whilst he carried off the rest of the litter, she loads herself with it, be it ever so big, and yet feels not herself more heavy, but rather more light, in the course she makes to secure it in her den, natural love making her burden more easy : how much more willingly then will a fatherly heart take charge of a soul in which he has found a desire of holy perfection, carrying it in his bosom as a mother does her little child, without being oppressed by so beloved a burden ! But this must be indeed a fatherly heart ; and therefore the apostles and all apostolic men call their disciples not only their children, but even their little children.”

Hence the success of a pastor in leading souls to perfection will be so much the greater, the more he succeeds in winning the hearts of his penitents by his charitable conduct towards them ; for then they will place in him perfect confidence. Having gained their confidence, he will find it easy to work upon the reformation of their hearts, to which he should principally direct his attention. In this reformation of their hearts he must have in view nothing but the glory of God and the spiritual good of souls. He should guide them according to the mode observed by God and his angels, leading them by

inspirations, suggestions, instructions, remonstrances, entreaties, in all patience and doctrine according to the duties of their state of life, and not according to a false, sentimental piety. There have been authors of sentimental piety; accordingly they published sentimental prayers, and books that teach sentimental piety. They speak to the imagination rather than to the heart, understanding and will. They address themselves especially to women; in a mincing style they preach to them a soft and sensual kind of devotion and piety. Never recommend such works to any one whom you wish to lead to the practice of solid virtue. The authors of such publications are perfect strangers to the secrets of the cross and incapable of appreciating humility and self-denial. Their publications will never make saints.

The director of souls should, like the spouse, knock at the door of their hearts, gently pressing against them that they may open; when open, he should introduce salvation into them with joy; if they refuse to open, he should, like our Lord, bear with this resistance to grace.

He must not expect to see at once the fruit of his efforts. Many souls are a very barren ground, from which he will gain in proportion as he perseveres in laboring with cordiality to promote their spiritual welfare. He must, of course, openly speak his mind when it becomes necessary, and then wait in peace a successful issue. The divine Samaritan did not direct that the patient should be healed, but that remedies should be applied. The pastor must have patience with souls and leave to God the care of healing them. He requires no more.

He must be aware that all will not take the same rapid flight in the career of perfection, but that some will

soar higher than others, while not a few will make but inconsiderable advances. Each one must be treated according to his capacity. Hence what he requires of his children must be not too much nor too untimely nor too much at once; he should teach them to elevate themselves towards heaven by slow degrees, to make a low flight like hens if they cannot take the lofty flight of eagles, to walk on the common road if unable to follow a more perfect one. "If you cannot pray," says St. Francis de Sales, "like a soul enjoying the gift of contemplation, you can at least make a spiritual reading and reflect on the same; if you are not strong enough to fast, you may at least deprive yourself of a delicate morsel; if you cannot quit the world, you may at least guard against its spirit; you cannot love God with a pure love; but you may love him at least out of gratitude; you do not experience a lively sorrow for your sins; but you can make efforts to obtain it by asking it of God; you cannot bestow many alms, but you can give at least a drink of water; you cannot bear great insults, but you may bear at least a little reproach without murmuring; to be despised is beyond what you can endure, but you may bear with that little coldness manifested by your neighbor in his behavior towards you; the sacrifice of your life is not required of you, but you can put up with some inconvenience and preserve patience under some little trying circumstances."

Let a pastor also be aware of the fact that there are certain little souls of whom nothing can be expected but that they should walk at a quiet and easy pace, without being urged; for should they be pressed, they would stumble and be filled with disappointment and disgust.

Souls deficient in courage must be managed as a general disposes of his troops. They are not to be placed in the front ranks, lest they should be seized with a panic and occasion disorder, that is to say, they are not to see all their wounds, for fear they should deem them incurable; they are to be encouraged to proceed at an easy pace according to their strength. The conduct of the great Apostle is here to be copied; in all his proceedings he kept in view the various degrees of weakness or strength which he discovered in his spiritual children. Whenever they are to be tried for their advancement in virtue let it be done with an amorous zeal and with a sweet spirit of charity, without forcing their hearts and without overwhelming them with any uncalled-for severity. This conduct must be observed especially in regard to souls of real good will and also in regard to weak and timorous souls, who by a little hard treatment would be at once altogether disheartened.

Discouragement and diffidence being one of the most frequent temptations for souls trying to advance on the road to perfection, the pastor must know how to raise their courage, invigorate their spirits, and inspire them with unbounded confidence, that they may walk with ardor in the performance of their duties, and may pursue their course without murmur and without disgust. He must perpetually inculcate the fear of God, not only on beginners, but on all persons, whatever progress they may have made in Christian virtue and perfection. Pious souls, unless possessed of that fear which belongs to the spouses of Christ, will soon stumble on their road.

There are certain souls of superior endowments who both advance themselves and others; these are not to be

spared, but must be vigorously urged on to the practice of true humility, of self-abnegation, with a degree of steadiness that unites sweetness and force.

There is but too common a failure in the direction of souls, which contributes rather to divert them from God than to lead them in the right path, namely, if a spiritual director recommends to souls his peculiar taste and brings into action his favorite methods of proceeding in the spiritual life. What he must attend to, is to know the particular attraction which God imparts to each soul in order to manifest it to those under his direction and see that they follow it faithfully.

He must be sagacious and discreet to discern the attractions of God from those of self-love. There are certain unmortified characters who are led by their airy imaginations and vainly suppose themselves to be in a certain way of holiness in which they are not. These are to be peremptorily diverted from pursuing their empty fancies, whatever they may allege in extenuation of their conduct ; for it is the only mode of withdrawing them from themselves and leading them to God. On the contrary, one possessed of solid virtue is not to be disturbed in his course, as such disturbance would have a direct tendency to impede the operation of God. This, therefore, is a matter of extreme delicacy. The virtuous and steady character is to be encouraged and supported, whilst the light and airy disposition, in which dissimulation forms a prominent feature, is to be tried and carefully scrutinized.

Let the pastor lay but a slight stress upon extraordinary and transcendant gifts, as it must be his purpose to conduct souls more by the solid mode of self denial, pro-

found humility, sweet charity, cordial support and sincerity, prompt and simple obedience, candid accusation of their faults, tranquil modesty, sweet and devout conversation and attraction to the presence of God than by any other method of a more elevated nature, as it is but too true that the human mind is so easily led by the imagination, is so prone to credulity, and so much attached to its own devices, that where there is no appearance of pure and solid virtue, little hope can be entertained. To set much value on extraordinary occurrences, or to hold one way of sanctity in less estimation than another, would be a mark of great ignorance, since no state or way is low or despicable except that of sin and imperfection.

Hence if the pastor notices that certain penitents of his are gifted with a higher and more sublime degree of prayer, he must not on that account set more value on them, unless he discovers in them at the same time a solid foundation of unfeigned virtue. What he should love to witness is, the appearance of those courageous souls who form the most absolute and efficacious purpose to pursue the right road in spite of every obstacle and without examining whether they experience relief or disgust, pleasure or pain, consolation or desolation. His direction must be such that in every occurrence of interior peace or commotion the soul should go straight to God by an unconditional surrender and a complete denial of the will, sweetness of heart and equality of mind.

As to the relative importance of the virtues conducing to perfection, he should teach his children :

1. To prefer those virtues the practice of which is the most frequent and common, to such as are seldom called

into exercise, for instance: Patience in the midst of injuries, sufferings and contradictions; true and profound humility, in the midst of humiliations, abjection and scorn; sweetness and equality of humor amidst an inequality of sentiments and events and a multiplicity of business and bustle; ready and simple obedience practised under the influence of repugnance, disgust and difficulty.

2. Not to judge of the comparative supernatural merit of a virtue by the greatness of its external act, because a virtue apparently small may be practised with much grace and charity, and a more splendid one with a very feeble degree of the love of God, which nevertheless is the rule and the measure of their value in his sight.

3. To prefer the more general virtues to such as are more limited in their reach, charity always excepted. For instance, to have a higher esteem for prayer, which is the torch of all the rest; for devotion which consecrates all our actions to the service of God; for humility, which makes us have a low opinion of ourselves, and of our actions; for gentleness, which makes us yield to every one; for patience, which makes us endure all things: to have, I say, a higher esteem for these virtues than for magnanimity, magnificence, or liberality, both because these virtues have reference to fewer objects and because they have less scope.

4. To regard the shining virtues with a little suspicion; for their splendor gives a strong handle to vain-glory, which is the very poison of the soul.

5. Not to esteem virtues according to the value set upon them by the generality of men, who are very bad judges of that kind of merchandise; thus, they will prefer temporal to spiritual alms; hair-shirts, fasting and

bodily austerities to meekness, modesty and mortification of the heart, which are nevertheless far more excellent.

6. Not to practise those virtues only which are more conformable to their taste, without troubling themselves about those which belong more particularly to their office and the duties of their state, serving God according to their own fashion, not according to his will, which is so frequent an abuse that we see numbers of persons, even among the devout, who are carried away by it.

7. To keep their hearts detached from everything created, from place, time, persons, even from the practice of particular virtuous acts, in order to attach them to God alone without reserve, and to seek no consolation, no rest and glory except in the Cross of our Saviour at whose feet every one ought to sacrifice all his caprices, affections, aversions, passions, inclinations, in a word, his entire self; for, we must suffer and sacrifice much for God, if we wish to enjoy him.

Love particularly three kinds of crosses : First, those which on account of their long duration, become in the end annoying and irksome. "Those crosses which we meet with in the public streets," said St. Francis de Sales, "are excellent, but those which we find at home are far more excellent, because they are heavier. They are better than iron-chains, disciplines, fasting and everything that has been invented by the spirit of austerity. In this the magnanimity of the children of the cross is manifested."

Secondly, those which come without being sought for. These come from God; they are all filled with the perfume of the place from which they come. Wheresoever there is less of our own choice, there is more of the good pleasure of God. The cross which our Lord lays upon

us is far preferable to the one which we lay upon ourselves. To carry our cross, means to embrace, with perfect submission to the divine will, all pains, troubles, contradictions, and mortifications of this life, the little ones as well as the great ones, no matter whether they are according to our liking or against it. We like to choose our own cross and leave another; we prefer a heavy one which strikes the eyes and is noticed by others, to a light one of which we become tired because it lasts so long. Illusion! We must carry *our* own cross—the one which presses upon us at present,—and not another. And its merit consists not in its quality, but in the degree of perfection with which it is borne. There is often more virtue in not saying an unlawful word, or in not casting a curious glance than in wearing a hair-shirt. Condescension to the humors of others and sweet but most reasonable forbearance with our neighbor, behold, what ought to be our cherished and special virtues. “O how much shorter work it is,” said St. Francis de Sales, “to accommodate ourselves to others, than to wish to bend every one to our own humors and opinions.”

A third kind of crosses which must be dear to us, are unjust vexations and persecutions. “Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake.” They bear more resemblance to our Saviour and lead with him a hidden life in God; they are considered wicked, poor fools, though they are good, rich, and wise; they are held in abomination by the wicked, but loved and blessed by the Lord. Persecutions are relics of our Saviour’s Cross; we must not lose even the smallest particle.

Choose from among the different spiritual exercises one for more frequent practice, such as the presence of God,

an exercise so highly commended by the saints, and so easily to be kept up by frequent but fervent ejaculations ; or purity of intention ; or submission to the divine will in all things, an exercise which cannot be too highly esteemed ; or self-abandonment into the hands of God, and self-renunciation, as any of these exercises includes generally all Christian perfection.

In the same manner, choose one particular virtue, such as humility, gentleness, patience, mortification, prayer, mercy and the like, for special practice ; this is something peculiar to all religious institutes which cultivate some particular virtue constituting their spirit without neglecting the others. Upon these principles the saints would not augur well of those persons whom they saw fluttering from one exercise to another, from one book to another, from one practice to another ; comparing them to drones who alight on every flower without extracting honey from any, ever learning without ever attaining to the true science of the saints ; always gathering, collecting and heaping up, without becoming rich, because they put everything into a bag with holes ; restless spirits who, seeking peace in spiritual riches, find it not.

Our law in everything must be the will of God ; but it is not sufficient to will what God wills, we must also will it in the manner he wills, and under all its circumstances. For instance, when ill, we must will to suffer this particular complaint and not another, in this special place and at this time, as well as among such persons as it shall please God.

According to St. Francis de Sales a pastor should also inculcate upon the minds of his subjects three principles of the spiritual life which, if put in practice, procure an

unspeakable peace and consolation for the soul, proceeding as they do from love ; namely :

1. To do everything for God and nothing for themselves, not only in temporal but also in spiritual matters. " Oh ! how happy should we be," he would exclaim, " were we to do everything for the love of God ! His love is infinite for a soul that rests in him."

2. Not to be one iota less punctual and faithful in the compliance with their respective duties on account of the privation of spiritual consolations, dryness of soul and other crosses which the Lord sends them. " One act performed in the state of spiritual aridity, is far more pleasing to God than many other acts performed with great tenderness of devotion ; because there is in it a stronger, though a less tender, love for God.

3. To bless the Lord just as much in adversity as in prosperity, according to the example of Job, whose song of praise and mourning was the same. " The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away : Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i, 21.)

As the principal object of the direction of souls consists in leading them to an intimate union with Jesus Christ, the confessor or pastor must direct them to lead such a life as makes them worthy of the frequent reception of Holy Communion. Our dear Saviour instituted the Blessed Sacrament to communicate himself to the soul of the worthy receiver in a most intimate manner. Hence it is his desire and that of his Church that all Christians should be induced to lead such a life as makes them worthy to receive Holy Communion every day. The early Christians received daily Holy Communion. St. Luke tells us of the early converts to Christianity, " that they

continued *daily* with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house." (Acts ii, 46.) The Fathers of the Church, the Council of Trent, and Innocent XI, have most earnestly recommended to the faithful frequent Communion, that is, receiving Communion daily or at least several times a week. Good pastors and confessors never fail to recommend frequent Communion to those who are worthy of it. The rules given by St. Alphonsus to confessors for allowing Holy Communion are as follows :

1. Monthly Communion should not be refused to any one sufficiently disposed for it ; it should even be recommended to all, even to those who are deeply immersed in secular business, as otherwise it will be difficult for them to persevere in the grace of God.

2. Weekly Communion may be permitted, even recommended to those who do not commit mortal sin, at least not habitually. A weekly Communion, however, may now and then be refused to those who habitually commit deliberate venial sins and are not solicitous to correct this evil habit. Such a privation of Communion is apt to make them more solicitous to correct their evil habit.

3. Holy Communion may be permitted several times a week and even recommended to those who avoid committing wilful venial sins and have no wilful affection for any of them ; have a great desire to receive Communion frequently and endeavor to become perfect, and practise mental prayer and mortification.

Frequent Communion may also sometimes be permitted even to such souls as have not those dispositions, if it can be reasonably foreseen that they would fall into mortal sin, if they were deprived of the strength of Holy Communion.

4. Daily Communion may be permitted to those who have the dispositions just mentioned and have, besides, overcome most of their evil inclinations. Sometimes daily Communion may be permitted for a short time, on account of some special circumstance, for instance, on account of a Novena. Now and then a confessor may deprive certain penitents of a Holy Communion, to try their obedience, or humility, or for some other just reason. (St. Alphonsus, Praxis Confess.)

“It is an indiscretion,” says St. Francis de Sales, “to counsel every one without distinction to receive Communion frequently; but it is still greater indiscretion to blame any one for it.” One day a certain priest blamed St. Catharine of Sienna for receiving Holy Communion frequently, saying that St. Augustine did neither approve nor disapprove daily Communion. “Well,” said she, “since St. Augustine did not blame it, I pray do not you blame it, and I am satisfied.”

Should certain married people imagine that on account of their state of life, they are unworthy of frequent and even weekly Communion, let the confessor tell them what St. Francis de Sales tells them. “In the Old Law,” he says, “God saw it unfit that creditors should require the payment of debts on festival days; but he did not consider it unfit that debtors should pay their debts on those days if their creditors required them to do so. In like manner it is an indecency, though not a great sin, to solicit the payment of the marriage-debt on the day on which one has received Holy Communion; but it is no indecency, but rather a meritorious act to pay it. Hence no one, for paying this debt, should be prevented from receiving Holy Communion, if otherwise they are dis-

posed for it. It is certain that in the primitive Church all Christians received Communion every day, although they were married and blessed with many children. For this reason I say that to receive Holy Communion frequently cannot cause any annoyance or inconvenience to father or mother, to husband or wife, provided the receiver be prudent and discreet. As for bodily diseases, there is none that can be a lawful impediment to this holy devotion, except that only which causes frequent vomiting. When a soul begins in earnest to lead a spiritual life, God consoles it, banishes its troubles and fills it with his love.

God enlightens the mind, reveals to us wondrous secrets, shows us what path to follow and what path to avoid. God's love converts labors into pleasures, and fatigue into repose. He makes every burden light, every austerity attractive.

But these consolations are not lasting. They have their times and their seasons, as it pleases God to grant or to withdraw them. In this God always acts for our greater good.

When the heavenly light vanishes, the devil introduces disquiet and desolation into our hearts, in order to detach us from the service of God.

Frequently we are overwhelmed with melancholy: prayer becomes arid, meditation grows wearisome. Then come disheartening thoughts about ourselves. We see ourselves as it were repulsed and abandoned by God, entirely separated from him. It seems to us that nothing we have hitherto done is pleasing to him; that nothing we *can* do in future will profit us. Hence discouragement, distrust, despair, which represent all our faults as mortal sins, all our miseries as irremediable.

St. Teresa says, "For several days all my good thoughts and visions seem withdrawn and even forgotten,

so that I can find no good that has ever been in me. It seems to have been all a dream. At the same time bodily pain distresses me. My mind is disturbed so that I cannot even think about God. If I read anything I do not understand it. I seem to be full of faults and without any resolution to practise virtue. I seem unable to resist the least temptation or slander. It seems to me then I am good for nothing. I give way to sadness, thinking I have deceived all who trusted me. I would like to hide myself where no one could see me; but this love of solitude comes not from love of virtue, but from lack of courage. I feel as if I would like to dispute with all who contradict me. Yet God has been so good that I do not offend him so frequently as I was wont to do. I do not ask God to deliver me from these trials, but only to keep me from offending him, should it be his will that I should always suffer thus. I see what great grace it is that God does not always keep me in this state. (Rel. i, 25.)

This sad condition also is, thank God, not lasting. Let us use one condition to enable us to bear the other. In consolations let us think of our faults and sins; in times of darkness and despondency let us remember that one ray of God's light will dissipate all these terrors and restore unutterable peace to our hearts.

The devil carefully studies each one's character. Those who have a tender conscience he tempts to foolish scrupulosity. If they fly from even the shadow of a fault he will tempt them to believe that sin exists where there is really no sin, as for example in sudden or unguarded thoughts, so that at last the spiritual life becomes an intolerable burden to them. (As to the direction of such souls, see "Scrupulous Conscience" in Vol. "The Greatest and the First Command.")

CHAPTER XIII.

AN IMPORTANT DECREE OF THE S. CONGREGATIO EPISCOPORUM ET REGULARIUM.

(*From the Italian.*)

“From the Secretariate of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, June 27, 1876.

To His Eminence Cardinal Patrizi, Protector of the Sisterhood of our Lady of the Good Shepherd.

The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars has very carefully inquired into a complaint presented through the Archbishop of St. James' in Chili on behalf of the ordinary confessors of the convents of the Sisters of our Lady of the Good Shepherd. The complaint has reference to the *permission* granted to the sisters to receive Holy Communion on days other than those mentioned in their constitutions, and to the *prohibition* to receive Holy Communion on days mentioned in their constitutions. The sister superior, the Mother Provincial of the Convent in Chili asserts, on the one hand, that the right to permit or not to permit Holy Communion to the sisters belongs to the mother superior by virtue of their constitutions approved by the Holy See.

The before-mentioned confessors, on the other hand, maintain that by virtue of the decrees issued by the Holy See, it is the business of the confessor as the director of the sisters, to allow the frequent reception of Holy Communion to those who are worthy of it, and to forbid it

even on days mentioned in their constitutions, to those sisters whom he does not find sufficiently prepared for it.

“The before-mentioned Sacred Congregation has, moreover, examined the written opinion of January 28 of last year, which your Eminence as Protector of the Sisterhood gave according to our request. In this opinion of yours you have carefully expressed your views. On the same occasion the Sacred Congregation examined also a few other articles of the constitutions of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and found that to the sisters it is made a matter of importance and is prescribed by their constitutions that the sisters should manifest the state of their conscience to the mother superior in a manner which, on account of the abuses that have arisen mostly in convents of sisters, is no longer permitted by the Holy See. Of this manifestation of the state of conscience mention is made in Constitution XXVI, Art. 2, and Constitution XXXV, Art. 2.

After this examination, the Sacred Congregation submitted the whole question to the decision of His Holiness, to whom an exact account has been given by the undersigned Secretary, in an audience that took place on the 28th of April of last year. And the Holy Father has ordained that in reference to *Holy Communion* the constitutions of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd should be made to agree with the “*Jus Commune*,” as it is laid down by the decrees issued by the Holy See and is carefully expressed by your Eminence in your opinion given on the 28th of January. Accordingly it is the wish of the Holy Father that Article 9 of the Constitution XXXV should be entirely abrogated and set aside, and that the observance of Article 3 of Constitution V be so changed and restrict-

ed that the mother-superior shall have the right to forbid Holy Communion to a sister only in case the latter has, since her last confession, committed a fault that is public and rather grievous and disedifying to the sisters. This prohibition of Holy Communion, however, shall last only until this sister has gone again to confession.

“In regard to the aforesaid *manifestation of the state of conscience*, the Holy Father has ordained that in the Institute of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd the following general rule shall in future be put in force: *Manifestatio conscientie in præsens restringitur tantum ad publicam Constitutionum transgressionem et ad profectum in virtutibus, et quidem non OBLIGATORIE, sed FACULTATIVE*, and that Article 2 of Constitution XXXV should not be regarded as being contained in the book of Rules and Constitutions; but that Article 2 of Constitution XXVI be so changed and restricted that the sisters, if they wish, may manifest to the sister superior their public faults against the constitutions and against progress in virtue.

“If, besides the expressions in the aforesaid articles of the constitutions, there should occur other expressions that are contrary to these regulations of the Holy See, or that are ambiguous, they shall henceforward be looked upon as no longer existing in the constitutions, or shall be understood in the sense of these regulations, and all this notwithstanding the circumstance that these constitutions were approved *in forma generica* by Benedict XIV, of glorious memory, in a decree dated September 26, 1741, and beginning with the words, ‘*In supremo militantis Ecclesie solio.*’

“That these Papal regulations may be put in practice, Your Eminence will please forward them to the Superior General of the Institute of the Sisters of the Good Shep-

herd, that she may as soon as possible communicate them to all the Superiors of the Institute, especially to the Provincial Superior of the convent of St. James' in Chili, and may enjoin upon them their strict observance. To the Superiors of the Roman convents they may be communicated directly.

"Most respectfully I remain your most obedient servant,

"J. CARDINAL FERRIFRI.

"ENEAS SBARRETTI, *Secretary.*"

The articles of the constitutions mentioned in the decree read as follows :—

"Constitution XXVI, Art. 2: They (the sisters) shall have nothing more at heart than the entire manifestation of their conscience to their superior, and for this end they shall every year make known their hearts as to their good mother, by disclosing to her their progress as well as their defects in the exercise of prayer, in the practice of virtue, and in the spiritual life. They shall do all this in order to encourage, to humble and to strengthen themselves, and to enter into the holy and spiritual filiation which our Lord has so much recommended.

"Constitution XXXV, Art. 2: She (the superior) shall open to all her daughters alike her maternal and friendly heart, so that with all confidence they may have recourse to her in their doubts, scruples, perplexities, troubles and temptations. She shall do all in her power to observe the rules and constitutions without being in any way singular, and without taking any advantage in regard to clothing, food or other things. She shall be treated like the rest in such manner as necessity may require.

"Constitution XXXV, Art. 9: She (the superior) shall not easily grant permission to receive the sacraments

oftener than is prescribed by the constitutions, for fear that the sisters might receive Communion through routine, jealousy, self-overestimation and vanity rather than through reverential love.

“ Constitution V, Art. 3 : As far as possible they (the sisters) shall have two Masses on Sundays and holydays of obligation ; one shall be at seven o’clock for the convenience of the sick, and the other, which is to be the convent-mass, shall be said about eight or nine o’clock. This Mass should, as far as possible, be accompanied by singing, and during this Mass, the sisters shall receive holy Communion, unless the superior ordains otherwise.”

The decree just quoted has as such reference only to the Institute of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. We find, however, applied therein certain principles which need a fuller explanation.

1. The most important and at the same time the most difficult exercise for religious is obedience. Obedience is the most important exercise because on it more than on anything else real progress in perfection depends.

Obedience is also the most difficult exercise because the uninterrupted and complete sacrifice of one’s own will can be made only through continual humiliation and self-denial. Hence it is that superiors must be very discreet in requiring obedience, in order to avoid great mistakes and their evil consequences.

When, in the beginning, the modern religious institutes existed outside of the canonical regulations pertaining to religious, they were left mainly to the care of the bishops in whose dioceses they sprang up. (1)

(1) Cfr. Lucidi, *De visitatione Sacrorum Liminum*, § 5, n. 250. Sqq. Benedict XIV says—*Inst. Eccles.* 29, n. 13—*Sedes Apostolica Tertiarias*

But when afterwards such modern religious institutes established themselves in a canonical sense alongside of the older orders and grew rapidly and increased in numbers in the always fertile soil of the Church, the Holy See took them under her especial protection, and has always been solicitous to prevent such mistakes by carefully defining (1) as much as possible the powers of the superiors. For this reason the Holy See wishes that the superior should be elected and not appointed (2), and that this appointment should be for a certain period (not for more than six years) (3); and, moreover, that she be at least forty years of age, and she

ejusmodi dissimulare et tanquam sua auctoritate minime probatas Episcoporum jurisdictioni permittere consuevit."

(1) The best explanation about the present practice of Rome in regard to this matter is given in the words entitled "*Animadversiones*" used by the S. C. Ep. et Reg. when it returned for alteration the constitutions of different institutes that had been presented for approbation. In the "*Methodus, quæ a S. Congregatione negotiis et consultationibus Episcoporum et Regularium præposita servatur in approbandis novis Institutis votorum simplicium*" the *Animadversiones* are added to the constitutions of twenty-one institutes that were presented for approbation from the year 1858 to 1861. The following citations of the S. C. Ep. et Reg. are taken from them.

(2) "Nova et plena periculi est confirmatio Moderatricis Generalis absque capitulo." *S. C. E. et R. 6. Jun. 1860.* — "Nimis absonum et a iure et a moribus est, ut Moderatrix Generalis ab Episcopo deputetur, sed in omnibus fere Institutis hoc ad capitulum generale sororum spectat. Quapropter necessarium est fieri Constitutionem, qua statuatur capitulum generale, præfiniantur illius sorores vocales, modus eligendi Moderatricem Generalem, eius qualitates, ætas, et anni professionis, nec non tempus quo in officio permanere debeat." *S. C. E. et R. 24. Sept. 1860.* (*Methodus* pag. 15. 22.)

(3) "Electio Superiorissæ facienda erit quolibet sexennio in capitulo generali per vota secreta. In eodem munere confirmari non poterit, absque Apostolicæ Sedis venia, quod etiam relate ad fundatricem servandum erit." *S. C. E. et R. 24. Sept. 1860.* (*Meth. p. 23.*)

must have been a member of the institute for eight years. (1)

It is, therefore, always a matter of censure, if in the constitutions the “*auctoritas moderatricis generalis nimis ampla et absoluta apparet.*” (2)

The Sacred Congregation for the due limitation of the Constitutions defines (3) more exactly the obligations of the vows; of the vow of poverty, for instance; it reserves (4) to the Holy See the expulsion from the institute, and the dispensation from the vows. For the same reason have been issued those regulations that, on the one hand, as-

(1) “*Concilium Tridentinum pro Superiorissis eligendis requirit ætatem 40 annorum et 8 annos professionis. Hæc Tridentini dispositio servanda erit quoad Moderatricem Generalem.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 12. *Jul.* 1861. — “*Sufficiens haud est ætas 30 annorum pro Moderatrice Generali, nec expedit ut ea in suo munere semper confirmari possit.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 25. *Apr.* 1860. (Meth. p. 26. 12.)

(2) Meth. p. 9. 13. 15. 16. 23. etc.

(3) “*Reformanda sunt, quæ de voto paupertatis edicuntur; votum enim simplex paupertatis non privat professam dominio rerum, sed tantum usufructu.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 6. *Junii* 1860. — “*Nec coarctanda (erit) facultas libere disponendi ante professionem.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 30. *Apr.* 1860 — “*Cum corporis valetudo nullam relationem habeat cum voto paupertatis, supprimenda erunt verba quibus exprimitur, sorores donare valetudinem ipsam Instituto.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 23. *Jul.* 1860. (Meth. p. 15. 13. 19.)

(4) “*Dimissio sororum ob infirmam valetudinem caritati adversatur, ac etiam iustitiæ si agatur de sororibus, quæ vota perpetua emisissent.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 10. *Mart.* 1860. — “*Vota simplicia, quæ in huiusmodi Instituti emittuntur, solvi nequeunt nisi ab Apostolica Sede.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 1. *Sept.* 1860. — “*In Congregationibus mulierum in usu minime est, ut vota simplicia sint perpetua ex parte voventium et solvantur ex parte Instituti. Solent potius emitti prius vota ad tempus et deinde perpetua, pro quorum dispensatione ad Apostolicam Sedem recurrendum est.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 24. *Sept.* 1860. — “*Dispensatio votorum reservata erit Apostolicæ Sedi. Pro expulsionem vero determinandæ erunt in particulari causæ graves, nec expulsio effectum habere poterit, nisi ea per Episcopum communicetur S. Congregationi, ut ab ea approbetur.*” *S. C. E. et R.* 11. *Jul.* 1860. (Meth. 10. 21. 22. 18.)

sign to the superioress, under the name of assistants, certain prudent and discreet sisters to be her advisers, whose consent she must obtain in matters of any grave importance; (1) and, on the other hand, intrust the spiritual direction of the sisters to a confessor who shall not be chosen by the sisters nor appointed by the superioress, but shall be deputed (2) by the Bishop. This last point is quoted by the above-mentioned decree, and for this reason we will speak of it more in detail.

(1) "In omnibus huiusmodi Institutis Moderatrices Generales habent proprium consilium, quod ex assistentibus generalibus componitur, quodque in rebus gravioribus suum suffragium dare debet." *S. C. E. et R.* 24. *Sept.* 1860.—"Determinandi sunt casus graviores, in quibus accedere debet consensus consultiarum, nempe pro admissione ad vestitionem et professionem, pro novis domibus erigendis (præter consensum Ordinarii loci), pro alienationibus et impositionibus debitorum (pro quibus etiam forma a SS. Canonibus præscripta præsertim quoad bene placitum Apostolicum servanda erit), aliisque contractibus ineundis." *S. C. E. et R.* 12. *Jul.* 1861.—"Quarum (sc. of the assistants) consensum in nonnullis casibus requirere, et consilium in aliis expetere debet (sc. the superioress),... præsertim quoad receptionem aspirantium, quæ arbitrio dumtaxat Superiorissæ Generalis relinquenda non est, nec Ordinarii licentia excludenda." *S. C. E. et R.* 23. *Mart.* 1860.—"Cum munus assistentium requirat prudentiam et morum gravitatem, præscribenda erit ætas 35 vel saltem 30 annorum." *S. C. E. et R.* 23. *Jul.* 1860. (Meth. p. 22. 26. 11. 19.)

(2) "Quoad Confessarios servanda erit Constitutio Benedicti XIV, *Pastoralis curæ*, et Confessarii deputandi erunt ab Episcopis respectivis." *S. C. E. et R.* 23. *Jul.* 1860.—"Cum proprium sit Episcoporum deputare Confessarios monialium, non solet attribui ius eos nominandi monialibus ipsis." *S. C. E. et R.* 1. *Sept.* 1860.—"Exorbitans a iure est, concedere Superiorissæ facultatem nominandi et proponendi Confessarios, cum in huiusmodi deputationibus libertas relinquenda sit Episcopis iuxta Constitutionem Benedicti XIV, incipientem *Pastoralis curæ*, cuius observantia in regulis inserenda erit." *S. C. E. et R.* 10. *Mart.* 1860. (Meth. p. 19. 21. 9.)

"Constitution XXX. of the Institute of the Good Shepherd, conceding to the superioress and her assistants and counsellors the right to choose or to dismiss their Confessors, was suppressed by a decree of *S. C. Ep. et Reg.*

2. For the exceedingly difficult and important office of directing consciences no one is better qualified than the priest, particularly the confessor. The theological studies, especially moral theology and ascetism, to which he has devoted himself during many years; the practical experience gained in the ministry, chiefly in the administration of the sacrament of penance; the deep insight that he obtains into the state of the souls of his penitents, above all, when the latter go frequently to confession; finally and principally, the sacramental grace received in Holy Orders,—all these things qualify him to be a physician as well as a director of souls. The Church, therefore, has never intrusted this office to a layman, and she could not do so, since Christ himself has delivered the “*munus pastorale*” to the teaching and not to the hearing Church. The religious, if they are neither priests nor appointed confessors, are no exception to this rule.

On the other hand, however, the chief duties of the superiors, even though they are not priests (hence also of the superiors of female religious institutes), consists essentially in leading their subjects into the spirit of the rules and constitutions of their order, in directing and stimulating them to the faithful and cheerful observance of them, and in thus helping them to attain perfection. To accomplish this end it is necessary that the rules and constitutions of the order should contain regulations imposing these things as matters of obedience.

Although such direction of souls is good and necessary

Apr. 14, 1845, with the remark, “Confessarios deputand s(esse) ab Ordinariis ad præscriptum s. Conc. Trid. et Constitutionum Apostolicarum.”
Cfr. Buss. The Order of the Good Shepherd.”

to every religious community, yet in order that it may not produce injurious effects, the superioress should fully understand human nature, should be gifted with great wisdom, and should, above all, exercise judicious moderation. A limited acuteness that is not able to discriminate between what is essential and what is not, between weakness and perverseness, between insinuating behavior and childlike sincerity, between earnestness and firmness of character and reserve and stubbornness ; a predominant bent of the mind that allows itself to be swayed by first impressions ; an excessive zeal that is anxious to make saints of all the members of the household in a day ; an unconscious passion for ruling that is desirous of ruling over everything because it must rule over many things, —all this may lead to serious mistakes, notwithstanding the best intentions, and particularly when the constitutions do not set any defined limits. As long as there is question of a positive furtherance of the striving after perfection, the abuse of authority is naturally much less than when it is designed to find out and remove the exact cause of the malady in those who are apparently or actually lukewarm, or who are delinquents. It may then happen that the reproof which must necessarily be given becomes an unwarrantable examination of conscience and the legitimate exaction of sincerity turns out to be a manifestation of interior temptations and of sins. One is apt to set one's self up as a physician who wishes to make a diagnosis, and who is anxious to prescribe and to regulate the diet as well as the medicines to be used before the reception of the sacraments, unmindful, in the meantime, of the fact that Christ and the Church have long ago appointed in the duly authorized confessor a

well-trained and approved physician of the soul. Having once reached this stage, arrogance may go so far as to wish to decide whether or not, in doubtful cases, the subjects may receive Communion without previously going to confession; what especially the timid and the scrupulous should say or not say in confession; how they should say or not say it; how long they should stay in the confessional; whether, after they have made their confession, they may return to the confessor, etc. In short, one usurps all the powers of the confessor, leaving him only the faculty of giving absolution;—all this is done to the greater honor of God and for the salvation of souls, in the name of religious obedience so highly recommended by the rules and constitutions. That under these specious reasons the coercion of consciences may be pushed so far and still farther, is abundantly proved by the history of those French converts that were infected with Jansenism. It is, however, known that Jansenistical rigorism in practical ascetism has become more prevalent than the Jansenistical heresy. (1)

(1) Father Ballerini in a note to Gury's Moral Theology, vol. ii, n. 341, (Ed. Rom. 1876) expresses himself in very strong language in regard to the abuses in question. In connection with the question whether and how far the confessor should forbid Holy Communion for the purpose of exercising his penitents in obedience, he censures most severely those superioresses of convents, who claim the same right in regard to this matter. The following is the language that he uses:

“Quod vero in re præsentì prorsus intolerabile videri merito debet, illud est, quod facultatem concedendi aut negandi accessum ad sacram communionem temere sibi usurpare non dubitent etiam femine, quæ in monasteriis aut pia aliqua congregatione potestatem forte aliquam exerceant vel in moniales sibi subiectas vel in puellas, quæ in istis monasteriis educantur, vel etiam mere scholas aut sodalitates ibidem frequentant.”

He points to Jansenism as the source of such impropriety. “Iste nimis mirum abusus olim Jansenianis fraudibus in aliqua Gallia monasteria in-

3. In order to remove such abuses, or not to allow them to prevail, the Holy See has laid down a general rule (*regola generale*) which in the communicated decree for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd is formulated thus: *Manifestatio conscientie in præsens restringitur tantum ad publicam Constitutionum transgressionem et ad profectum in virtutibus, et quidem non obligatorie sed facultative.*" According to the *Methodus* (1) the Holy See does not approve—at least has not done so since the year 1858—the rules and constitutions of religious orders that concede to superior-esses more extensive powers; and, an occasion having offered, it ordered that the concessions made formerly, for instance to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, should be withdrawn. According to the different readings of the constitutions presented for approbation, of which, as has been said, the *Methodus* enumerates twenty-one, from 1858 till 1861, the S. C. E. et R. in its *animadversiones* occasionally

(1) *Methodus* pages 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30.

vectus, nescio quomodo. haud minima ex parte sensim sine sensu recentioris præsertim feminarum Congregationes pervasit, ut magisterium spiritus ac quemdam veluti episcopatum feminae sibi vindicent."

He then goes on to show how improper it is for laymen and women to arrogate to themselves the office of directing souls:

"Atque ita dum *regimen animarum* a s. Gregorio *ars artium* appellatur; dum Synodorum Decreta ac Pontificiæ Constitutiones ad spiritum huiusce coetus culturam deputari præcipiunt lectissimos quosque e clero, qui doctrina, prudentia, iudicii maturitate, gravitate, rerum spiritualium experientia etc. polleant, atque adeo Episcopi non Confessarios omnes, sed paucos quosdam tanquam ad id munus præ omnibus idoneos approbant; dum in Ordinibus Religiosorum ad *Patris Spiritualis* officium nonnisi gravissimæ, si qui sint, et iudicio prudentiaque conspicui deliguntur; dum et Sancti admonent, ut qui spirituale iter aggredi instituit, ita in duce viæ assumendo sataget, ut unum e millibus seligat; dum fatemur omnes, in ipsis theologicis disciplinis difficillimam eam partem haberi, quam *asceticam* vel *mysticam* nuncupant, quippe quæ singulares quasdam iu-

gives to this general rule a wider significance, and this in explaining them, is of the highest importance. We call special attention to the more weighty of the *animadversiones* in reference to the constitutions of the Sisters of Christian Charity (daughters of the Immaculate Conception) at Paderborn, dated March 10, 1860 (Meth. p. 9). The rule reads thus: "*Ob abusus qui irrepserunt, in præsens S. Congregatio minime solet approbare apperitionem conscientiae Superiorissæ, sed tantum permittitur, ut sorores, SI VELINT pandere possint defectus in regulæ observantia et progressum quoad virtutes; DE ALIIS ENIM AB EIS AGENDUM EST CUM CONFESSARIO.*" In the *Animadversiones* to the Constitutions of the Sisters of Nazareth,

dicii, discretionis etc. dotes exigit: nihilominus gravissimum hoc difficilimumque officium subinde iam fere totum imbecilitati et ignorantiae feminei ingenii commissum cernimus."

He then goes on to show the consequences of such directions, saying:

"Cumque imbecilitatem mentisque inopiam, ubi auctoritas aliqua potestasque accedat, eo audacior subsequi consuescat temeritas; hinc in monasteria quasi postliminio revocatas aliquas videre erat ex illis scenis, quæ in Janseniana historia alias ad risum nos, iustamque simul indignationem provocabant. Vidisses scilicet, omnem ad hoc industriam conferri, ut moniales Confessariorum curæ, instructioni, directioni subtraherentur: quo scilicet totum spiritus magisterium a veneranda omnium matre tamquam ab unico fonte hauriretur; quem in finem vel in ipsis Constitutionibus advertere erat, prætextis coloribus, ac subdola arte insinuari callidissime, ne Confessarii opera præterquam ad peccatorum absolutionem adhiberetur, reliqua vero omnia matris spiritualis providis reservarentur curis; adeo ut quæ pars maxime ardua ecclesiastici magisterii habetur, hæc deferenda iam esset ad mulieres; de quibus alioquin Apostolus præscribit 1. Tim. 2: *Mulier in silentio discat cum omni subiectione. Docere autem mulieri non permitto . . . , sed esse in silentio.* Quamquam et illud perperam dixisses, spiritualibus hisce matribus reliquum dumtaxat præter materiam absolutionis reservatum fuisse. Istis quippe matribus et magistris totius conscientiae ratio plenissime reddenda præscribebatur. Ad quod sane pertinebat non solum omnes aperire animi motus, pravasque inclinationes ac tentationes, sed etiam lapsus ac peccata. Et quod omnem fidem

at Chalon, dated September 27, 1861 (Meth. p. 28), we read : “ *Manifestatio conscientiae in praesens restringitur tantum ad publicam Constitutionum transgressionem, et ad profectum in virtutibus ; et quidem non obligatorie sed facultative. Insuper MINIME APPROBANDUM VIDETUR, UT CONSCIENTIÆ MANIFESTATIO DIRECTORIBUS SEU SUPERIORIBUS FIAT* ; and respecting the Constitutions of the Petits Frères de Marie at Lyons, under date of December 13, 1859, (Meth. pp. 30 et 31), is mentioned as disallowed : “ L’obbligo, che tutt’i fratelli hanno di rendere conto della coscienza al Superiore Generale *per scritto*, with the subsequent addition : “ Cosa non amessa dalla Sagra Congregazione (that is, the obligation, that all the Brothers should render to the Superior-General, in *writing* a manifestation of conscience. is not vermitted by the Sacred Congregation).”

prætergreditur, cum vel in cœtibus Religiosorum, qui hanc legem de reddenda conscientiae ratione servant, prudenter caveatur, ut quædam materia, si quid in eis peccatum forte fuerit, confessioni sacramentali apud ipsum Superiorem peragenda reservetur, quo scilicet decentiae ac verecundiae consulatur : levitas atque imprudentia muliebris eo usque progressa fuerat, ut et quæ pertinent ad vitia castitati contraria, ea femineae curiositati enarrari in familiari colloquio deberent, adeo ut in ipsis quoque Constitutionibus (obtento prætextu docendi modum, quo præstandum id foret) huius enarrationis necessitas expresse inserta appareret. Qui quidam abusus quam similes forent confessionibus, quas a monialibus suis celeberrima Mondonville (ut tradit historia Janseniani Instituti S. Infantiae) solebat excipere, facile quisque videt.”

After quoting the prohibition of the “manifestatio conscientiae,” and explaining what we here omit, Ballerini again comes back to the right claimed by the superioresses to allow or to forbid Holy Communion, and to the impropriety of such a claim, and points out the evil effects of such an abuse. He says :

Cæterum ex spirituali hoc magisterio conscientiarumque inspectione moderatricibus istis commissæ ecce illud incommodum, unde hujus Notæ occasio sumpta est. Nam dum Constitutiones *Religiosorum* Ordinum quæ reddendam conscientiae rationem præscribunt, simul severissime

Hence from all this there results the following explanation of the above-mentioned rule : 1. *The Holy See wishes that the manifestation of conscience should be reserved to the confessor as the director of souls appointed by Christ and the Church, and forbids the sisters to render such manifestation to their superioresses, and forbids the latter to receive it* (S. C. MINIME solet approbare aperationem conscientie Superiorissæ). The only thing that is permitted by the Holy Father is, the explaining of one's self about two points : *it is allowed to them to accuse themselves of violations of the rules and constitutions of the order, but only of those that are public (restringitur tantum ad publicam Constitutionum transgressionem);* therefore not of those that are secret, and much less to accuse themselves of the interior violations of them, for example, through aversion, disgust, imprecation, etc. ; *and it is allowed them to express themselves about their progress in virtue (restringitur. . . . ad profectum in virtutibus);*

interdicunt Superioribus, ne notitia inde hausta ad externam gubernationem ullatenus utantur, haud hujus freni patiens sperari poterat in genium *femineum*. Hinc quod ad prudens Confessarii judicium pertinet quæ cuique, monialium frequentia SS. Communionis sit consentanea hoc sibi officium monasterii præses utpote *conscientiarum moderatrix* arripit ; ideoque quod hæc monialis semel, illa ter, ista bis in hebdomada, alia quotidie ad S. Communionem accedere valeat, decretori *mulierculæ arbitrari* definiendum relinquitur. Sed et alius exinde deterrimus existit abusus quem sane ex tanta potestate ingenio sui impoti facta pronum erat expectasse. Nam quæ tamquam gravissima pœna olim gravioribus peccatis atque atrocioribus *criminibus* per Synodorum canones judicio *Episcoporum* infligi subinde consueverat, ut delinquentes a sacra synaxi arcerentur : hoc tamquam telo *feminea* mens criterii inops ad *leviusculas* quasdam culpas, sive veras sive phantasticas, ulciscendas utitur." At the close of these indeed very severe conclusions drawn by the learned Jesuit, we would remark that the experiences and observations made by his confrères in every part of the world were very suggestive to him.

also about those that are interior, as they are not excepted; not, however, about offences or temptations against the virtues, for these are *defectus contra virtutes*. What, however, goes beyond these two points the sisters must not make known to the superioress (*tantum permittitur, ut sorores si velint pandere possint, etc.*), and consequently the superiors must not receive communications that go beyond these two points; about matters of this kind they should rather refer their subjects to their confessor (*de aliis enim ab eis agendum cum Confessario*).

2. The *Manifestatio conscientie* about these two points must be made orally, not in writing (*cosa non amessa dalla S. C.* 3. It must be made *only to the Superioress*, not to another sister, no matter what office she may hold, not even to the director (superior) of the institute. We conclude the former, because in the quoted passage mention is made only of the *Superiorissa Moderatrix*, etc.; and the latter is expressly forbidden (*minime approbandum videtur, ut conscientie manifestatio Directoribus seu Superioribus fiat*). (1) 4. To express themselves about these two points is left to the good pleasure of the sisters; is permitted, but not commanded (*si velint, pandere possint—permittitur—non obligatorie sed facultative*), so that it cannot be exacted by the superioresses either in general or in particular. To endeavor by a rigid behavior, by giving signs of displeasure, or by any other kind of moral pressure to persuade the sisters to avail themselves of this permission, when they do not wish to do so, would differ from

(1) The relation of the director to the superior is thus given by Lucidi l. c. 438: "Quamvis. . . . in hujusmodi Institutis Director in rebus externis admittatur, qui Episcopi vices agat, non tamen approbatur Director spiritualis, cum huic rei jam provisum sit per patrem spirituales seu confessarium, qui in qualibet Instituti domo deputari debet."

a direct command only in form, and would, therefore, like the latter, be disallowed. We should certainly confidently expect that the superiors of religious orders, whose business it is to inculcate obedience, should themselves scrupulously practise it when they receive a command from their highest superior, the Pope. (1)

4. Every religious community has its appointed Communion-days on which all the sisters, though they are not obliged, have the right to approach Holy Communion. If, now, a sister wishes to go to Communion *oftener*, from whom must she ask permission? And who has the authority to forbid a sister the reception of Communion on the *usual* Communion-days? The superioresses of the convents of the Good Shepherd in Chili claimed the right

(1) Ballerini thus speaks l. c. about the sense of this *regula generalis*:

“Sapientissime S. C. E. et R., quæ ne viris quidem religiosis, si mere laici hi sint, directionis spiritualis officium aut munus vel excipiendi conscientiæ rationem etiam scripto redditam, vel etiam mere cognoscendi de subditorum tentationibus, permisit, quæque id muneris quoad moniales ita proprium esse voluit Confessarii, ut rationem conscientiæ ab iis ne Directoribus quidem aut Superioribus reddendam probaverit, huiusmodi (that is, those mentioned above) abusus a congregationibus mulierum auferendos curavit. In primis itaque materiam, de qua monialibus permittatur, ut rationem aliquam Moderatrici seu Superiorissæ reddant, ad duo restrinxit capita, nimirum ad exteriores seu publicas transgressiones Constitutionum, et ad progressum in virtutibus. Deinde vero hanc ipsam conscientiæ manifestationem non obligatorie, sed facultative dumtaxat concessit, id est ne quoad duo illa quidem capita obligationem ullam manifestandi conscientiam adesse voluit, sed libero cuiusque arbitrio commisit.”

But then he explains the expression “in præsens,” which the S. C. nearly always adds to the word “admittitur,” or “restringitur” in a manner which we cannot admit, namely, he contends that this permission is only provisionally, tentatively given. For he says:

“Denique, quod maximi momenti est, hanc (sc. conscientiæ manifestationem) non absolute concessit, sed semper addidit, se id permittere *in præsens*; quo aperte significatur, ad experimentum quoddam hæc interim tolerari. Et id quidem prudentissime cautum est, tum quia manifestum

in both cases, because they said it was so expressed in their constitutions, approved by the Apostolic See. On the contrary, the confessors claimed both, as included in the office of directing souls, intrusted to them by the Papal decrees. The Holy Father stated that the latter were in the right, and gave the order that the constitutions of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd should be made to agree with the *jus commune*, as it is laid down by the decrees issued by the Holy See. Thereby is expressed that the *jus commune*, according to which all the regulations in regard to frequent Communion is a matter that concerns the confessors as the director of souls, (1) must also be applied to persons who belong to religious communities. That in the application of this right the regular Communion-days should form a basis, and should not be overlooked, must be regarded as a matter understood. On the other hand, the Holy Father has given to the aforesaid superioresses the authority *in single cases to forbid the receiving of Holy Communion by a sister, if she has committed since her last*

(1) Cfr. S. Alphonsus, Praxis Confessarii, n. 148 Sqq.

est, Moderatrici media artesque non deesse, quibus ad id, quod facultativum dicitur, moniales, quæ offensam illam habere nolint, facile cogat, tum quia argumentum de progressu in virtutibus facillimum ac prope necessarium transitum præbet ad defectus contra virtutes, et sic incommodum confessionum a monialibus Moderatrici de peccatis quibusvis peragendarum obvio prætextu redire forte posset."

That the Apostolic See in the faithful discharge of its pastoral office, will not hesitate to forbid the manifestation of conscience also in these two points, if this concession should be abused, there can be no doubt. The collocation, however, of the word "in præsens," for example, in the afore-mentioned sentence "ob abuses qui irrepserunt, in præsens S. C. minime solet approbare," etc., seems to refer not to the future, but to the past, so that the sense is: Even though this concession was formerly granted, its abuse gives occasion to the Congregation for the present (in præsens) no longer to grant concessions so extensive.

confession a fault that is somewhat grievous, that is a public fault, and is one that creates great surprise among the sisters, and that this prohibition should continue only until this sister again goes to confession. These superioresses can, therefore, (1) *forbid* a Sister to receive Holy Communion (*proibire ad una suora di accostarsi alla Sacramentale (Communione)*); yet permission to go to Communion except on the days appointed by the Constitutions, cannot be given by them, but only by the confessor.*(2) They have this power *only in regard to the sisters that are subject to them* (*proibire ad una suora*); hence not in regard to other persons of the convent, such as servants, penitents, boarders, pupils," † etc. They may (3) exercise this authority *only in case* (nell' unico caso) the sister in question has committed a *certain fault* (*abbia commesso una mancanza*); therefore not on account of her moral condition or conduct in general. And this fault must be (a) somewhat *grievous*, (b) must be *public*, (c) must *create surprise* among the

* Even the directors (superiors) have in this respect no power. "Monasterii Directori minime competit, bene vero Confessario. dare licentiam sanctimoniali, ut sacram Eucharistiam sumat diebus, quibus eadem sumere praescriptum non est." Lucidi l. c. 134.

† Ballerini in the above-mentioned Note to Gury, Vol. II. n. 341, regards it as a grave abuse that the superioress or other sisters in the quality of directresses of boarding-schools, teachers, etc., arrogate to themselves the right to forbid their pupils, etc., the reception of Holy Communion for the most insignificant reasons.'

"Quæ tamquam gravissima pœna olim gravioribus peccatis, atque atrocioribus criminibus per Synodorum canones iudicio Episcoporum infligi subinde consueverat, ut delinquentes a sacra synaxi arcerentur, hoc tanquam telo feminea mens criterii inops ad leviusculas quasdam culpas, sive veras sive phantasticas, ulciscendas utitur. Neque id solum cum monialibus subiectis monasterii præses factitare levi negotio solet, sed iuxta proverbium: *a bove maiori discit arare minor*, etiam singulæ magistræ puellarum, quæ in monasteriis educantur, hanc temere sibi potestatem assumunt; et ubi putares, levem aliquam puellæ inobedientiam, aut mo-

other sisters (aliquants grave e publica con ammiragione delle altre suore). If any one of these three marks be wanting; if, therefore, there is question of a fault that is known to the Sisters and is a surprise to them, but has reference only to a trifling matter; or there is question of a fault which, though important, yet is known only to the superioress or to one or the other sister; or, finally, if there is question of a fault that notwithstanding its gravity and its notoriety, creates no surprise among the sisters, Holy Communion must not be forbidden to the sister. From these restrictions it appears that the Holy Father has put this authority into the hands of the superioress, not as a means of punishment, not even primarily to prevent an unworthy Communion (for to judge whether by the fault a mortal sin has been committed, is not the business of the superioress); but expressly to prevent the sister referred to from adding to the

lestiam aliquam alteri alumnae factam, aut silentii violatam legem congrue puri iri posse subtracto pomo aut dulciario aut etiam parte ientaculi, levissima ista capita coelestem Eucharistiae cibum et gratiam sacramenti insipienter iuxta et crudeliter subtrahunt. Neque hoc satis Quandoquidem enim feminae imbecillitas hanc suae auctoritatis opinionem iam imbibit, ut iuxta phrasim Apostoli 1. Cor. 4, 1 dispensationem mysteriorum Dei sibi concreditam sacramentorumque usum quoad puellas alumnas in sua prorsus potestate arbitrioque omnino residere existimet; non quoad Eucharistiae solum, sed etiam quoad sacramentum Pœnitentiae cæcam tyrannidem exercet. Et quod inauditum in ecclesiastica disciplina est, quod ne scelestissimis quidem malefactoribus uspiam denegatum fuit, hoc lerem aliquam ob noxam puellis interdicitur, ne qua die reliquæ alumnae confitentur. quæpiam delinquens ad Confessarium accedendi copiam habere possit. Hæc nimirum aliaque huiusmodi contigisse oportebat, quando suis cuique debitis gradibus atque officiis non servatis, res ad id loci perducatur, de quo Scriptura sacra prophetavit, (Eccl. 10) "*Est malum, quod vidi sub sole, quasi per errorem egrediens a facie principis: positum stultum in dignitate sublimi, et divites sedere deorsum vidi servos in equis,*" etc.

scandal given a second and greater scandal by going to Communion without having previously approached the tribunal of penance. What if the fault were of such a nature that without giving the right to the superioress to forbid Holy Communion it might be feared a mortal sin had been committed? In this case she, of course, cannot forbid Holy Communion under obedience, yet she should try to prevent it by maternal advice and entreaties.—The fault must (4) have been committed since the last confession (*dopo l'ultima Confessione Sacramentale*). It would not be allowed on account of a previously committed fault to wish to forbid Holy Communion, because it has just now come to the knowledge of the superioress or of the rest of the sisters. It must rather be assumed that the fault and the scandal have been atoned for by that confession that has been made in the meantime.—The prohibition to receive Communion must not (5) extend farther than *the next confession* (e cio fintanto chè, la detta suora siasi nuovamente accostata al Sacramento della Penitenza). At this point the Confessor has to decide whether Holy Communion is still to be omitted.—(6) *Only to the superioress* of the respective convent has this authority been given (*alla Superiora resti la facoltà*), so that another sister, whatever office she may hold, or the superioress of another convent, has not this authority.—(7) Finally, it must yet be observed that the superioress, when such a fault as the above-mentioned has been committed, *may* forbid Holy Communion, but *is not obliged* to do so in every case, for this lies in the nature of the concession that has been granted (*facoltà di proibire*). In every single case it is, therefore, left to her discretion whether or not to use the power that she has received. It certainly may happen

that she is obliged in conscience to use this power. In doubtful cases, the fervent invocation of the Holy Ghost and consultation with others may furnish her with the needed light.

Excessive zeal, predilection for old customs, fondness for governing, etc., may also here tempt one to transgress the limits so wisely set by the Holy See, and while one imagines that one is promoting the salvation of the individual sisters or the general welfare of the Institute, by unlawfully evading the prohibition, one may sin against the authorities of the Church appointed by God. This would happen if, for example, in regard to the frequent reception of Holy Communion, the regulation were made that the sisters should ask the consent of the superioress in reference to the permission given by the confessor, or what would be the same thing, that they should ask her whether they might avail themselves of his permission. This would also be the case, if the Superioress would insist too much that on the appointed days all the sisters should go to Holy Communion, and to effect this, would make the rule that in case any sister would omit Holy Communion, she should previously notify her or offer an excuse for the omission. In the unlawful infringement of the rights of the confessor, there also exists the twofold danger—that, on the one hand, the superioress may enter on the forbidden ground of conscience matters, and, on the other hand, that a sister, through fear of being questioned about the affairs of her conscience, or intimidated by the dissatisfied air of the superioress, may be driven to Holy Communion in a disposition of mind which would perhaps justify the omission of Communion altogether. These and other evasions and

violations of the regulations of the Church cannot possibly be salutary to a religious community. How could a religious community advance in perfection if the spirit of God, the spirit of obedience, were wanting just there where it is most needed, namely, in the superiors.

5. The decree above quoted is binding as such only on the consciences of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Yet it may be asked whether the rules of this decree do not also concern the religious of other orders.

In the first place, we should remember that those communities that have received from the Holy See, or, what is the same thing, from the S. C. E. et R. the same or similar rules, (the *Methodus* actually mentions fourteen such communities) are obliged in conscience strictly to observe them. The respective superiors would sin directly against the obedience due to the Holy See if, notwithstanding the decree, they wished to continue in their former practice. In a doubt about the correct interpretation of the regulations made, the decisions that have been given, and that clearly express what the Holy Father means, should furnish a trustworthy solution.

But other religious communities, also, that have not received such directions, whether their rules and constitutions are approved or not, have in our opinion every reason not to disregard the general regulations contained in the decree quoted above. The Holy Father points out in this decree, in a very definite manner, only as a common law, (*jus commune*) as a general rule, (*regola generale*) that matters of conscience, and therefore the direct regulation of the reception of the sacraments, even among the sisters of a religious community, is in principal the business of the confessor as the director of souls

appointed by Christ and his Church. Hence it follows that superiors have only authority in this matter when it has been given to them by the Church. As is shown by the *Methodus*, such powers as surpass the limits set by the decree for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, have not been granted to any religious institute since 1858. It may be that other institutes, the constitutions of which have been approved by the Holy See before the year just mentioned, may possess greater concessions. Whether now, where this is the case, it is proved that the wishes of the Holy Father should be acquiesced in, and a change in the Constitutions respecting the points in question should be voluntarily submitted (1) to the Holy See for approbation, let those find out whom it concerns. At all events, the superiors of these institutes will not be able to free themselves from the obligation of interpreting their lawfully existing constitutions *ad mentem Papæ*, and they should, therefore, conscientiously examine themselves whether in the practice which they have hitherto followed, they have in no way transgressed the measure that has been allowed them. For what is done by them beyond this measure is an unwarrantable transgression, constituting just those *abusus qui irrepererunt*, which, as the Holy Father wishes, should absolutely be removed, and on account of which he laid down the general rule quoted above. To know this, and still to wish to continue to govern in the usual unlawful manner, would certainly be irreconcilable either with the respect due to the

(1) Neither the superiors nor the Bishop have a right to do this, for "Facultas non conceditur mutandi constitutiones, postquam hæ fuerint a S. Sede approbatæ, sed requiritur ejus expressa licentia." *S. C. E. et R.* Sept. 27, 1861. *Meth.* p. 29.

Holy Father, or with the true religious spirit, which is a spirit of childlike and trustful obedience, and would necessarily be injurious to the institute and to its individual members. But in those religious communities that do not yet possess constitutions approved by the Holy See, one should particularly keep within the limits set by this decree for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, because if sooner or later their rules and constitutions are presented for approbation, more extensive powers or faculties need not be expected.

There remains yet the question whether the *two concessions* made to the Superiors of the Good Shepherd in regard to the manifestation of conscience and the prohibition of receiving Communion, may be used by the Superiors of other religious Orders, *even in case* they have not received any special authority either by the approbation of their constitutions or in some other form. Without permission this cannot be done. For in the exercise of these powers is contained, (as has been explained in number 2) a participation in the *munus pastorale* which, like the *munus docendi*, is in its nature the business of the teaching, *not of the hearing*, Church, to which office laymen can lay claim only so far as it is *conceded to them by the Prelates of the Church*, and in this sense the superioresses of religious institutes are to be reckoned among the laity, even though in another sense they may be regarded as religious persons. In reference to the voluntary *manifestatio conscientie* about the public violation of the rules and constitutions and about progress in virtue, the Holy See, as appears from the *Methodus*, has not only made these concessions to those institutions asking for the approbation of their rules and constitu-

tions, but has declared them to be contained in the decree above quoted as the *regola generale*. Hence we think that we may safely conclude that at least *in præsens* the Holy Father wishes to extend this concession to all religious institutes.—However, in regard to the second concession made by the Holy Father to the Superiors of the Order of the Good Shepherd with respect to the prohibition to receive Holy Communion in the above-mentioned single case, the matter does not seem to us to be so certain. Nothing definite can therefore be gleaned from the before-mentioned decree, and we have not been able to find out anything (1) whence we may safely conclude that such is the general wish of the Pope. And although we may not understand why the Holy Father should grant to one Institute what he does not grant to another, it does not follow that he really wishes to extend the concession in question to all religious institutes. It is indeed possible that he does not regard this means as *in general* necessary for the prevention of scandals. In a well-regulated convent there is hardly any need of such a thing; for in these undoubtedly rare cases in which the concession is applied, would not the Sister in question feel herself moved by her own conscience to remain from Holy Communion till her next confession? On the other hand, the superioress is obliged to prevent the scandal as far as possible; yet we are of opinion that wise and gentle admonitions, entreaties, etc., could also accomplish

(1) The *Methodus* mentions Holy Communion only in one place, on p. 17, where the S. C. E. and E. in revising the Constitutions of the St. Joseph's Sisters at Chamberry, uses the following language: "Nimis frequenter videtur communio ex præscripto regulæ tribus vicibus in qualibet hebdomada et novus quasi ritus admitteretur, si sorores instante communione in ecclesia licentiam a Superiorissa petere deberent."

the purpose without the *ultima ratio* of a formal command *sub obedientia*. Where, however, one thinks that the exercise of such a power or faculty is needed, the safest means is always the best. Let the faculty be asked of the competent authorities.—(Münster Pastoralblatt.)

CHAPTER XIV.

MORTIFICATION.

Mortification is undoubtedly a necessary means to acquire perfection. "He who disregards mortification," says St. Francis de Sales, "will never be able to raise his soul to the contemplation of God." And St. Teresa adds: "It is folly to suppose that God admits immortalized souls to his friendship." St. John of the Cross warns us not to give credit to any one who rejects penitential exercises, were his doctrine confirmed even by miracles. Hence St. Alphonsus admonishes confessors to do their utmost to implant the love of mortification in souls.

In the practice of bodily mortifications, however, great discretion is required. "No sooner," says St. Alphonsus, "does the devil perceive that certain souls have devoted themselves to God, and that they are enjoying the first fruits of heavenly consolation, than he urges them to the practice of excessive austerities, fully aware that indiscreet souls will soon sink under the combined weight of bloody disciplines, rigorous fasts, hair-shirts and other painful works of penance. This is an artifice of the devil which he veils under the cloak of fervor. His real design is to make the soul unfit for the exact performance of her allotted duties, and to reduce her, if possible, to a state of utter prostration. In such a state, as he knows by experience, the soul will easily give up her pious practices with the risk of never relishing them again; especially

so if, at this period, the dew of heavenly consolations should dry up, in consequence of which the soul will soon discontinue, one by one, of her usual mortifications, devotions, Communions and all other practices of piety, fancying that the spiritual life is too irksome and too tedious. Lamentable in the extreme would it be, if at this period such souls had the misfortune to be guided by indiscreet confessors, who, not satisfied with practising such austerities themselves, should recommend them to their penitents.

A certain Superior of Carthusian Monks chastised his body by such revolting austerities that one would have been tempted to believe that he had either quitted the body or dwelt in one of iron. St. Francis de Sales said of this Superior, that he might be compared with those physicians who people the graveyards, because he had been instrumental in the untimely death of many of his brethren in religion who, regardless of their weak constitutions, had overdone themselves under his direction, in works of penance, and had sunk into an early grave. His successor, on the contrary, adds the Saint, united mildness and moderation to austerity, and thus he was enabled to preserve his community in excellent health both of body and soul. We must employ discretion and bear in mind that God always requires reasonable service at our hands. Indeed, our method of glorifying God must ever be regulated by sound judgment. St. Bernard in his youth came well-nigh being wrecked on this reef. At a riper age he bewailed his youthful austerities; indeed, a sinner could not have deplored his waywardness more sincerely. He was wont to call his untimely austerities "the errors of his youth." I once knew a distinguished scholar who, in a short time, completely under-

mined his vigorous frame by rigid austerities, and thus rendered himself not only useless but even entirely helpless. He only became aware of his mistake when the evil was beyond cure. I had left no means untried to moderate his overstrained fervor, but to no purpose. My repeated counsels and warnings were alike unheeded.

Misguided by a false zeal for corporal austerities, a certain nun chastised her flesh by the severest penances to such a degree that her health was placed in imminent jeopardy. St. Francis de Sales gave her the following counsel, which is an admirable expression of his habitual mildness and sound judgment. "Do not subject your feeble body to greater rigor than the rules of your convent prescribe. Be at much pains to preserve your bodily health ; for a good supply of vigor is necessary to perform all our exercises well. We shall surely be wanting in strength if we waste our body by indiscreet austerities. Very few," observed the saint, "know how to avoid extremes. The spirit is willing ; hence the first impulse of our fervor always exacts too much from the frail flesh. But we ought to bear in mind that as the spirit cannot support a well-fed body, so, a half-starved body cannot support the spirit." In order to guard against extremes in this particular, St. Alphonsus admonishes spiritual directors to inculcate upon their penitents the necessity of abstaining from all austerities for which they have not obtained the sanction of their confessor. Hence, too, arises a new source of merit for the penitent,—the merit of obedience.

St. John of the Cross asserts that they who perform mortifications against obedience may be said to advance rather in vice than in virtue.

It is a general rule, says St. Alphonsus, that external mortifications are only to be permitted when the penitent asks for them; otherwise they avail but little inasmuch as their merit almost entirely depends upon the degree of fervor with which they are practised.

It suffices for a beginning to allow or prescribe easy practices, such as the little cilicium, discipline, etc., in order rather to increase in souls the desire of mortification than to give a real occasion of mortifying themselves.

Let the director be cautioned not to deviate from this rule, until the penitent is well grounded in the spiritual life; for it is only then that the duty arises for the confessor to grant more effective mortifications.

The director must be especially on his guard in prescribing severe austerities to beginners who are usually favored with extraordinary fervor and consolation. The safest way is to admonish them to patience in suffering contempt and adversity, to obedience, to bridling their curiosity, etc. He may, however, accompany the refusal with the promise to grant their petition as soon as they have brought the inner man under their control.

It is advisable occasionally to refuse every kind of exterior mortification until the penitent has mastered the predominant passion, such as vanity, selfishness, self-esteem, self-will and the like.

St. Alphonsus cautions directors to be extremely sparing when there is question of retrenching the usual amount of sleep; for nothing is more calculated to injure both body and mind. If the necessary amount of sleep is denied to the body, headache will be the natural consequence; whereupon a person becomes unfit to perform his duties.

“As regards fasting, I should like,” says St. Francis de Sales, “to see the sentiments of St. Jerome adopted. The holy doctor said to the devout matron Læta: ‘Prolonged and excessive fasts are extremely hateful in my eyes, especially in such as are still young. I am convinced by my own experience that a young jackass when jaded, easily turns from the road; I mean, young people who have contracted some malady by rigorous fasting, are in danger of falling a prey to effeminacy.’ Beyond a doubt, fasting is the most painful of austerities, inasmuch as it places the axe at the root. Surely that which attacks the root of a tree is far more dangerous than that which hardly penetrates the bark, or softly brushes its boughs. The deer is known to lose its fleetness on two occasions: when it is too fat, and when it is too lean. We are exposed to great temptations both when the body is well fed, and when it is emaciated. On the one hand, the body becomes overbearing by indulgence, and on the other, it gives way to peevishness, and dreads to encounter difficulties; and as we cannot hope to bear a pampered body, so we cannot expect a wasted frame to support us. It is a melancholy fact that many a devout person has been reduced to the condition of a cripple in the bloom of youth by rigid fasts, scourges, hair-shirts, etc., as the case of St. Bernard proves but too clearly. At last such persons are usually forced to discontinue their penances and give their whole attention to the restoration of their health. Surely they would have acted more wisely had they consulted the duties and obligations of their vocation. Labor tends nearly and perhaps equally as much as fasting to subdue the flesh. Hence, if your labor is obligatory and conducive

to the greater glory of God, I should gladly see you prefer labor, how irksome soever it may be, to prolonged vigils and unmerciful fasts. The Church, too, exempts hard-toiling laborers even from the regular fasts. One, for instance, experiences great difficulty in fasting; another's feeling of delicacy is sharply mortified by serving the sick; a third is weighed down by the duties of the confessional, of preaching, praying, etc. The pain and disgust a person has to contend with in fulfilling duties of this nature, are far more meritorious than the most rigid fasts. For, not to mention the mortifications connected with preaching, catechising, confessing and the like, they are productive of the most desirable fruit in our neighbor. Hence it may be admitted as a general maxim that it is proper to allow the body a greater amount of strength than is absolutely requisite for the moment. It will be no arduous task to reduce the body if necessary, but we cannot restore our wasted strength at pleasure. A wound is easily inflicted, but a cure is not so easily effected. The spirit must make some allowance for the body, treating it as a father does an obedient son. But if the flesh revolts, we must employ the rod, according to the advice of the Apostle. 'I chastise my flesh and reduce it to slavery.' "

It will not be amiss when granting leave for a mortification, to give the penitent to understand that every pain we can inflict upon ourselves is far below the heroic endurance of the saints and infinitely less than the torments our dear Lord chose to undergo for our sake, and that our best endeavor is utter impotence when compared with one single drop of his Precious Blood shed for our redemption.

Note.—Be it borne in mind that they whose duties require extraordinary application of the mind, as the pursuit of science, spiritual exercises, especially if the persons are still young, always need their proper nourishment. This is of great importance, inasmuch as such persons would otherwise soon lose their mental energy, especially so if they should add loss of sleep to the want of proper food. Should they, in addition to all this, be troubled with violent scruples, they would soon be plunged into a most deplorable condition. The inevitable result would be extreme prostration both of body and soul, nervousness would follow, and the imagination would be worked up to such a pitch that the devil would find it an easy task to fill it with a host of ugly and shameful phantoms. In a word, the whole human system would become a prey to the impure suggestions of the devil, and the body having been reduced to so helpless a condition as even in no small degree to affect the mind, there would arise for the soul the greatest difficulty in resisting and repelling the attacks of the evil one, in consequence of which the poor soul easily imagines that all is lost, as it is no longer able to distinguish between temptation and the consent of the will. Hence it is necessary to refuse to scrupulous persons such extraordinary mortifications. Spiritual directors should even be very backward in allowing other souls rigorous austerities; and should they ever find mortifications of this kind necessary, even then they should grant them for a short time only. The reason for so doing is evident, namely, lest so much rigor impair the penitent's bodily or spiritual health, or lest the practice of such austerity render such persons in any way unfit for the punctual performance of more impor-

tant duties. There is one exception, that is, when God requires an extraordinary sacrifice of a soul. Still directors should not scruple to delay their consent until they have evident reason for recognizing the will of God. They should not entertain the slightest fear of thwarting the designs of God by a refusal. For it must be taken for granted that souls are to be directed according to the ordinary rules of spiritual direction until the contrary is proved. As soon, however, as they discern the finger of God, they not only may, but they must grant the request, fully assured that God will supply every deficiency, nay, that he will render such souls sufficiently vigorous to practise every austerity without the least danger to their allotted duties.

The devil is deceit itself. He places some particular good before our eyes to be obtained by austerities, fully aware that in striving for the secondary good we become incapable of achieving the common good, which after all must be preferred to every private consideration. As regards religious, the best advice for them is to take the food and rest allowed by the rule of their institute, in order thereby to be able not for a time only, but for many years, nay for a whole life, to keep the rules, to serve their fellow-religious, and to promote the well-being of their neighbor for the greater glory of God.

A Sister of the Visitation once expressed a desire to practise greater austerities. "Be satisfied," said St. Francis de Sales, "with the mortifications connected with the punctual observance of the rule. The devil is highly delighted to see one undertake a multiplicity of corporal penances. It is madness to seek perfection in a way different from that which all your companions pursue.

Never fear, God will furnish you with abundant means of mortifying yourself, provided you are faithful in making a proper use of the occasions offered. Be on the alert, and offer an open heart to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit." This was not merely the doctrine of the Saint, but his own special practice also.

Although we must esteem exterior mortifications even to the degree of rejecting the contrary doctrine, were it accompanied even by miracles, yet we must not measure our advancement in perfection either by the number or severity of our penances; for bodily austerities do not constitute the true spirit of mortification, inasmuch as they are not so necessarily and immediately connected with sanctity of life as is interior mortification; it is in the latter that the real progress of the soul consists. It is by obedience and the suppression of the passions that we gain most. Were we only at some pains to acquire these virtues, we should never lack occasion for exercising them. The more a soul practises self-denial, the more speedily will it soar above the things of earth and be raised to union with God.

The following are very salutary and harmless mortifications.

1. Endeavor always to preserve your whole exterior perfectly recollected, agreeable and modest. Never allow a word to escape your lips which is not spoken with calmness, discretion, gentleness and modesty, in a moderate tone of voice, yet so loud as to be understood. Never show in your looks any freedom, which causes distraction and satisfies your curiosity on all sides, nor have in your exterior any habit which is disorderly, or which might be said to arise from your love of ease, al-

ways try to keep the same easy but dignified exterior out of respect for the presence of God. All this is certainly a great mortification for human nature. This very same kind of mortification was one of those which St. Francis de Sales imposed upon himself, as we read in his life.

2. You can mortify your appetite in a most advantageous and safe manner by being indifferent to all kinds of food, never complaining or saying anything against it. All should be according to your taste, be it cold or warm, salted or unsalted; eat whatever is placed before you, without making any remark, because, in the opinion of St. Francis de Sales, we should have a great reverence for these words of our Lord: "*Manducate quæ apponuntur vobis.*" "For, in my opinion," says the Saint, "it shows greater virtue to eat of whatever is placed before you and in the order in which it is placed, without choosing whether it be according to your taste or not, than always to select the worst; because, though the latter may seem to be more rigorous, yet to the former there is united more self-denial, because you do not only deny your taste, but also your choice. Moreover, to select the worst dishes betrays a kind of spirit which is only as far away from pride as smoke is from fire. It is, besides, no small mortification to form your taste according to the will of everybody and to subject it on every occasion by accommodating yourself to that which you do not like, and by denying yourself that which you desire. I esteem St. Bernard much more for having drunk oil instead of wine or water, than if he had intentionally drunk worm-wood water, because he thereby showed that he did not care what he drank. To select

the food would show a spirit which pays attention to the dish and the sauce. To eat what is good without wishing to please yourself, and what is bad without showing any repugnance, and yet to be wholly indifferent in regard to the one as well as the other, is true mortification. In this very indifference to what you eat and drink consists the perfect accomplishment of these words : " Eat whatever is placed before you." From this I except, however, all food which is hurtful to health, or which causes depression of the mind, as happens to many when they take warm, highly seasoned, creamy, or flatulent food. I likewise except those occasions when nature stands in need of help and refreshment, in order that afterwards it may be able to indure great labors for the glory of God. In short, a constant and prudent temperance is better than a rigorous abstinence which is often interrupted by intemperance in eating. Those who are abstemious by nature have great advantages even in regard to science. Their body is like a bridled horse which is kept in obedience without much difficulty." St. Francis de Sales usually drank but little wine and this he mixed with much water; he was also accustomed to eat only very common meat, and if any one made remonstrances on this point, he alleged as a reason that he preferred to live as the poor, that he had a farmer's stomach, which relishes common food best. " One day," says M. de Belley, " when at table, I had given him very delicate meat; I remarked how he dexterously placed it to one side and in its place eat a piece of quite ordinary meat. " Now I have caught you in the act," said I to him, reminding him of the rule : " Eat whatever is placed before you." " Do you then not know," he answered, " that I have a farmer's stomach, which

stands in need of nourishing food ; your delicate meats would give it no nourishment." "My Father," I replied, "these are but evasive answers ; by these artful words you wish to conceal your mortifications." "In truth, this is no artfulness at all and I speak to you in all the sincerity of my heart. I grant that my palate would experience greater delight in delicate food, but, since we go to table for the sake of nourishment and not to please the appetite ; since we eat merely in order to live, I take whatever I know will best nourish me. To select the food according to its taste would be to live only in order to eat. However, in order to do honor to your table, I will, if you have a little patience, first lay the foundation of the dinner with nourishing food, and then cover it with that which is delicate."

3. Especially love and practise those mortifications which are inseparably united with the exact observance of the rules and the faithful fulfilment of the duties of your state of life, because these are most in accordance with the will of God and consequently most pleasing to him. For this reason St. Frances de Chantal wrote to one of her sisters in religion as follows : "When we see a tender conscience, subject to scruples, they say it is a mark of a good conscience ; but if such a soul does not submit to the advice given, it shows obstinacy and a secret presumption, and will surely soon fall into great disquiet of mind. I say the same of your inclination for mortifications, which shows that the fire of divine love is in your heart ; but if this inclination is not absolutely submitted to your superior, if it troubles you, and withdraws you from the sweet and tranquil attention which you owe to the presence of God, be assured that you are drawn by your human spirit, and that the devil has something to do

with it ; for the Spirit of God draws to perfect submission. He acts in us gently and sweetly ; he makes us prefer the uniform life and actions of our sisters to all those imaginary and pretended virtues which we expect to find in the exterior mortifications that we desire. If then you will believe me, you will mortify yourself by not practising the mortifications which you desire. Thus you will practise the true virtue of mortification and zeal which God desires of you."

4. Great account is to be made of the practice of little mortifications, since for these, occasions present themselves most frequently. Their constant practice becomes, in the end, a great mortification for human nature. As a light, but lasting rain is much more apt to penetrate the ground than a heavy shower, so little mortifications, if performed with perseverance, are better calculated to nourish the spirit of mortification than great austerities performed only now and then.

5. Rejoice when something is wanting to you, even though you should deem it necessary. "Never am I better off," says St. Francis de Sales, "than when I am badly off." Never complain of the inconveniences of the weather and the like. "Those mortifications which God sends us or which come to us on the part of men by his permission, are always more precious than those which are the off-spring of our own will. These prove a stumbling block to many who embrace with eagerness the mortifications which their inclination suggests, and which notwithstanding their apparent severity, are not difficult to them on account of the facility which their own predilection imparts ; but when they encounter some which proceed from another cause, they find them insupportable,

how slight soever they may be; for instance, one who has a strong inclination for the discipline, for hair-shirts, fasts and sack-cloth, may be so sensitive with all about his reputation that the most trifling jest or unfavorable observation puts him out of breath, troubles his peace of mind, prejudices his reason, and carries him on to deplorable extremities. Another who applies himself with ardor to the exercises of prayer and penance and the practice of silence, gives way to excessive impatience, anger and unmeasured lamentations at the loss of a lawsuit or some trifling damage to property. Another who gives alms and founds magnificent charitable establishments, breaks forth into groans and trembles with fear at the slightest infirmity or sickness. According as each one is more or less closely attached to the good things which minister to honor, profit, or pleasure, he bears with more or less patience the ills which are contrary to these kinds of goods without considering that it is the hand of God which bestows and takes them away, according to his pleasure. In fact, we wish to serve God, not according to his will, but according to our own. Do you think this is just?"

6. Above all, practise interior mortifications, that is, the mortification of the intellect, of the judgment, of the will, and of self-love. According to the doctrine of St. Francis de Sales, a single ounce of this kind of mortification is worth more than a whole pound of the other.

This Saint mortified his spirit by rejecting all vain imaginations, all strange and useless thoughts, which cause a loss of time, expose the soul to distractions, produce dislike for labor and all serious employments, and become the source of thousands of distractions in prayer and of thousands of temptations in the service of God.

He mortified his judgment by avoiding stubbornness in his ideas as well as in his opinions and assertions.

It is remarkable that in all the discussions that arose in his presence, he was never to be seen over-hasty in giving his opinion ; he allowed all the rest to speak first and by thus preferring their judgment to his own, he never entered into disputes unless forced to speak or give his opinion in matters concerning his office ; in such cases, he would agree with those whose opinion seemed to him the best, and then he remained firm and unyielding.

He mortified his will by constantly acting in such a manner as he deemed pleasing to God, and to be in the order of divine Providence, not considering whether or not it were pleasing to his inclinations. He daily received a number of letters, some of which were twelve or more pages long, often difficult to read ; nevertheless he answered each. Being told that this was too troublesome, he replied : "What matters that ; whilst doing this I need not do anything else." He wrote to St. Frances de Chantal : "Every day I learn how to deny my own will and to do that which is repugnant to it." It was in this constant sacrifice of his own will, in this denial of his most natural desires and wishes that this holy Bishop placed his virtue. "The devil," he wrote to one of his penitents, "cares little if you lacerate your body, provided you do your own will ; he does not fear bodily mortifications, but he truly fears obedience. No mortification or bodily austerity can equal the sacrifice of the will which lives in constant subjection. Do therefore never desire to be anything else than what you really are. Of what use is it to build castles in the air ? As to myself, I know only the last verse of the Lamb, which to some may seem

somewhat sad or melancholy, still how full of sweetness and harmony is it not for the heart: 'Father, may it be done to me, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!' Would that our hearts were always united with his heart, and our will with his will!"

Finally, he was not less ready to mortify self-love, which in all things seeks but itself, flies all unpleasant things, follows its own inclination, and avoids everything that may cause repugnance. He himself tells us that he waged a continual war against his own inclinations and his temperament until he had gained the victory. "There are two passions," he tells us in his candor, "the extirpation of which has cost me much, namely: Love and anger." He conquered love by directing it all towards God; over anger he gained the victory by taking—these are his own words—his heart into his hands, in order to repress the violence and impetuosity of his temperament, and it was through this especially that he gained so many graces, according to his favorite saying: That he who mortifies and subdues his natural inclinations most, will most abound in supernatural inspirations. "For a long time," says St. Francis de Chantal, "he had to fight against his passions; yet, by his generosity he so subdued them that they obeyed him, as slaves do their master, and afterwards scarcely a vestige of them remained." By God's grace he so ordered all his natural inclinations according to reason and the Gospel, that he performed no action which was not accompanied by some act of Christian virtue; and to such a degree did he purify his heart from all earthly inclinations, that he could say in truth: "I require but little, and the little which I require I re-

quire but little. I have scarcely any desires, and should I have to begin my life anew I would have none at all. If God should come to me, I would also go to him; but if he should not come, then I would conduct myself in such a manner as neither to ask for nor to refuse anything, so that I would occupy myself with no desire except with that of willing only what God wills. Often have I reflected on what was the greatest mortification ever performed by any of the Saints whose lives I have read, and the most incomparable one seems to me to be this. "For twenty-five years St. John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, and my God! with what love for his Redeemer did not his heart burn from the very womb of his mother! How long did he not sigh to enjoy his sacred presence, and nevertheless, fully determined to do God's holy will, he continued in the office which God had confided to him, without even once coming to visit him, and he continued in it until Christ himself deemed it expedient to go to him. Then, having baptized Christ, he never followed him, but continued in his office as he had done before. What heroic mortification was not this! To be so near to God, so near to the Redeemer, and still not to allow himself the satisfaction of going to see him! To be near him, and still not to enjoy his sacred presence! What else does this prove than that his heart was disinterested and detached from everything, and, in this case, detached from God himself; that he renounced all the spiritual encouragement and all the spiritual good which he might have drawn from the presence and company of Christ solely in order to fulfil his holy will and to attend to his service. This example of liberty of spirit so much exceeds all

conception that I cannot speak of it but with the greatest wonder and admiration."

This doctrine the saint often tried to inculcate upon the hearts of his beloved daughters of the Visitation; he often told them: "We must renounce everything; first of all, we must renounce all exterior goods, such as houses, property, parents, friends, acquaintances; then the goods of the body, that is to say, health, beauty, ease, the pleasures of the senses; then all the ideal goods, those which depend on the opinion of our neighbor, and which we call glory, honor, or a good name; finally, the goods of the heart, such as spiritual consolations; all these things we must deliver up into the hands of our Lord, that he may dispose of them according to his good pleasure, and then we must serve him without these goods just as if we possessed them, and all these renunciations must not be made out of contempt, but through self-denial, solely for the pure love of God. Never, he added, will we attain perfection, if we still retain some affection for an imperfection, however small it may be, even though it be but a useless thought, and we cannot comprehend how much harm this does to a soul. Our affections are precious, because all of them should be employed in loving God, so that we must be careful not to let them rest on useless things; a fault, however small it may be, if committed with affection, is more detrimental to perfection, than a hundred others committed through surprise and without affection.

7. Do not complain of contempt, of persecution, of pain or sickness. Rejoice in spirit when you are despised, ridiculed, and considered the worst of all. How beau-

tiful are not the prayers of a soul which joyfully accepts contempt ! This virtue is one of the most excellent, especially if you live in a Community ; remember, at the same time, that in imitation of the saints, you should cherish a particular affection for those who despise and oppose you, being kind towards them, doing good to them, honoring them, speaking well of them, and especially recommending them to God. For this love you should beg God in an especial manner ; you should particularly pray for it as soon as your nature feels a dislike for these your adversaries. To pray for this grace is especially pleasing to God, and he never leaves us unheard. St. Francis de Sales having once been calumniated, and this calumny having been spread far and wide, simply said : “ I humbled myself and did not tell the good reasons which I might have brought forth for my defence ; but I contented myself with confining my sorrow in the interior of my heart. The fruit which this patient suffering produced in me was a still greater love of God and greater fervor in meditation.” To a soul who greatly sympathized with him he wrote : “ Divine Providence well knows what reputation I need in order to fulfil well the office for which it intends to employ me, and I want neither more nor less than is pleasing to it.” “ We must die,” said the Saint, “ in order that God may live in us ; for it is impossible that a soul should attain to the union with God in any other way. These words ‘ we must die ’ are hard, but they are followed by great consolations, for we die to ourselves only that by this death we may become united to God. We must die to every other love, in order that we may live for the love of Jesus Christ and may not die the eternal death. Heavenly

wisdom and prudence, a high degree of contemplation, heroic constancy in adversities, an admirable presence of mind in unforeseen events, and a most astonishing facility in the practice of virtue, are, O Lord, the gifts and favors which Thou art accustomed to bestow upon those who, for Thy sake, free themselves from all inordinate attachments and affections. My God, how gladly would I die for my Redeemer! still, if I cannot die for him I will at least live for him alone!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRIEST AT THE SICK-BED.

The true conception of the Christian religion is that it is a divine institution of charity. The Gospel, therefore, has to be first a help, a cure, a consolation, in order to become a sermon. Hence our Lord did not take his apostles to academies and to porticos ; he led them to his select school—the bed-side of the sick.

The Church loves the sick. She who was bestowed upon the world for the cure of souls, has for our body and its infirmities a compassion equal to her respect. She has a sacrament whose grace is to cure and strengthen the sick. She has constructed palaces for those who are wounded and for those who are worn out by labor or exhausted by old age. She has created for them a service of devotion, of consecrated tenderness and of virginal love. Jesus wills, therefore, that his priests should go first to them.

During his life, our dear Saviour was the comforter of the sick. For them he showed more than a mother's compassion. For them he wrought most of his miracles. "I will come," he said to the centurion, "and heal thy servant." (Matt. viii, 7.) "He went about," says the Evangelist, "doing good, and healing all that were suffering." (Matt. xi, 5.)

It is the duty of the pastor to imitate this charity of Jesus Christ towards the sick. Ah ! let the sick, especially if poor and abandoned, or as dear to you

as the apple of your eye. If your charity is to shine forth towards all, it should shine forth especially towards the poor when they are sick. Procure for them all the relief and comfort you can; and if it is not in your power to assist them, ask others to do something for them. Show at least compassion for them. "As long as I know," wrote St. Francis de Sales to a sick person, "that you are confined to your bed of sickness, I will always bear you a great love and affection as to a person visited by the Lord. I am sincere in what I say."

Bear also patiently and charitably with the weaknesses of the sick, and pretend not to notice them. Do not require of them the perfect practice of virtue at a time when they are depressed by pains and miseries.

To be harsh and hard to the sick is to become accountable to God for their pains and sufferings. Generally speaking, those who were often sick themselves, are most charitable to the sick. "It is by my own pains, sufferings and infirmities," says St. Frances de Chantal, "that the Lord was pleased to make me sympathize with the sick, and practise patience and charity towards them. The Lord made me understand that there is nothing equal to perfect charity." You cannot go easily to excess in charity and affection for the sick, when there is question about procuring relief for them, not only when they are dangerously ill, but also when they complain of light indispositions. These indispositions, it is true, may sometimes be nothing but overgreat anxiety for their health, or may be only imaginary, or exaggerated; yet, generally speaking, you should believe what they tell you, for a slight indisposition may prove serious if neglected in the beginning. Even in imaginary evils

there is some reality at the bottom on account of the uneasiness and anxiety which they produce. Besides, should you not believe them, they will be afraid to tell you again when they are really suffering, thinking within themselves that it is useless to speak to you about their sufferings, because you would not believe them; and this might be followed by evil consequences. Hence, it is better to be deceived than not to apply remedies to evils which may really exist. Conceal then your hesitation to believe them, even if you have the best of reasons not to believe them. It is better to show yourself rather ready to believe them, than to expose yourself to the danger of violating charity.

One of the chief reasons why you should be very kind to the sick is, that you may be better able to benefit their souls in their pains and sufferings. A sick person will listen the more willingly to your spiritual discourse, the more he notices your charity and solicitude for him. Many a soul, it is true, is brought to a sense of her duty and enters into herself by means of bodily sickness; but the number of those who do not profit by their sufferings is far greater, because there are but too many who at the time of sickness, especially when the disease has assumed a chronic form, and also at the time of convalescence, do not combat their disorderly appetites, and, from being servants of God, they soon become the slaves of corrupt nature.

To guard the sick against this spiritual lethargy, it is well to relate to them what Father Surin, S. J., writes in one of his letters: "A young man," he says, "filled with the Holy Ghost, and with whom I had the happiness to travel for three days and from whom I learned

more of the spiritual life than ever before, told me among other things, that one of our greatest evils is that we do not profit well by our bodily infirmities ; that the Lord inflicts them upon us for a wise purpose ; for he unites himself to the soul more perfectly by sufferings than by consolations. Hence too great a care for preserving our health is a great obstacle in the road to perfection."

Should sick persons experience a great desire to advance in the spiritual life and to give themselves up to prayer, but feel unable to do so on account of their bodily infirmities, let them consider that God requires of them an angelic patience, a constant resignation and calm submission to the dispositions of his divine providence, a generous abandonment of themselves to his fatherly care, a perfect holy indifference for life or death, and an utter contempt for all earthly things. Then, if the Lord should wish to make use of them for his glory, he will repair in an hour's time all the harm that a sickness of several years may have caused them to suffer in their body. Hence, sick people must be repeatedly exhorted to pray often and most fervently for the grace to profit well by their sickness, and obtain the wise end for which the Lord is accustomed to visit us with different kinds of infirmities, in order that it may be said of them in truth : " This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

A great means to induce sick people to submit to God's holy will and to holy indifference for life or death is to show them that, by accepting death with perfect resignation to the holy will of God, they die with a merit similar to that of a martyr and go straight to heaven after death.

By death we sacrifice what is most dear to us—our life. This is the last sacrifice that we can make to God. It is a sacrifice most difficult to make because death is unnatural ; it is revolting to nature, for man was not made to die ; it is a punishment inflicted on man in consequence of the sin of Adam. Now, to die perfectly resigned to the just and holy will of God is to die with a merit similar to that of martyrdom.

According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, the merit of martyrdom does not consist merely in suffering many torments ; it consists rather in the act of conformity of the martyr's will to the holy will of God. Now if God, instead of employing the hand of the executioner, makes use of some natural means, such as sickness, or an accident, to take away my life, and I accept death with as much resignation to God's will as the martyr, God will give me the reward of a martyr. Now, we believe that a martyr goes straight to heaven after death. He, then, who dies with the dispositions and the merit of a martyr, shall receive a reward similar to that of a martyr.

Hence, the merit and crown of martyrdom are acquired not only by those who die for the faith, but also by all those who cheerfully accept death for the love of God. Such a death is an act of perfect love because by it we abandon and sacrifice ourselves without reserve to the holy will of God. Such an act of love cancels sin and the punishment due to it.

In order to be able to make this act of love at the hour of death, we should accustom ourselves to make it often during life. We should often make an offering of our life to God, declaring ourselves ready to accept, at any time, the kind of death which he has decreed for us from all

eternity. As soon as the holy martyrs knew that they had to suffer martyrdom, they began to make frequent offerings of their lives to God. For every such act they have obtained in heaven a special reward. We should imitate their example, because we, too, shall receive in heaven, as many crowns as we have made acts of entire abandonment of ourselves into the hands of God. We should daily beseech our Lord most earnestly to grant us the grace to accept death at his hands with the intention of pleasing him and doing his holy will.

Although this doctrine is very consoling for sick persons and well calculated to induce them to be perfectly resigned to God's holy will, yet let it be remembered that if the Lord does not enlighten their mind to understand it, and inflame their will to embrace and to love it, they will draw from it but little comfort and encouragement. In the life of St. Lidwine, who was sick for thirty-eight years, we read that in the beginning of her sickness she shrank from suffering. By a particular disposition of Providence, however, a celebrated servant of God, John Por, went to see her, and perceiving that she was not quite resigned to the will of God, he exhorted her to meditate frequently on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, that by the remembrance of his Passion she might gain courage to suffer more willingly. She promised to do so and fulfilled her promise, but could not find any relief for her soul. Every meditation was irksome and unpleasant, and she began again to break out into her usual complaints. Upon being asked by her director how she had succeeded in her meditation upon our Lord's Passion, and what profit she had derived from it, she replied, "O my father, your counsel was very good indeed, but the greatness of

my sufferings does not permit me to find any consolation in meditating on my Saviour's sorrows." Seeing at last that Lidwine derived no benefit from his charitable exhortations, the Rev. Father Por thought of another means. He gave her Holy Communion and, immediately after, whispered into her ear: "Till now I have tried to console you, but in vain; but now let Jesus Christ himself perform this office." Behold! no sooner had she swallowed the Sacred Host than she felt so great a love for Jesus Christ and so ardent a desire to become like unto him in his sufferings, that she broke out into sobs and sighs, and for two weeks she was hardly able to stop her tears. From this moment she never complained again, but desired to suffer still more for Jesus Christ.

Hence it is evident that the sick should be strengthened by the frequent reception of the sacraments; for they will derive more benefit from one single Communion than from all the exhortations they may receive, no matter how pious or persuasive they may be.

How well the Lord is pleased with the priest who faithfully complies with this duty, and how great a reward is awaiting him in the life to come, may be gathered from what we read in the life and revelations of St. Gertrude. One day after having recited the Office as far as the fifth lesson, St. Gertrude saw a religious who was ill and who had no one to say Matins with her. The Saint, moved by the charity which always animated her, said to our Lord: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have almost exhausted the little strength I have in reciting my Office so far; nevertheless, as I ardently desire Thee to abide with me during these holy days and as I have not a fitting abode prepared for Thee, I am willing, for Thy sake,

and in satisfaction for my faults, to begin Matins again." As she began the Office once more, our Lord verified the words: "I was sick and you visited me; and as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me," by appearing to her and overwhelming her with sweet consolations, which could neither be explained nor understood.

It appeared to the Saint that our Lord was seated at a table in the most sublime glory, and that he was distributing ineffable gifts, graces, and joys to the souls in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory, not only for each word, but even for each *letter* which she had repeated with the sick sister; and she also received an intelligence of the Psalms, Responses, and Lessons, which filled her with inexpressible delight. And when she besought our Lord to pour forth an abundant grace and benediction on the whole Church, "What do you desire that I should do, my beloved?" replied he, "for I give myself up to you with the same love and resignation as I abandoned myself to my Father on the cross; for even as I would not descend from the cross, until he willed it, so now I desire to do nothing but what you will. Distribute, then, in virtue of my divinity, all that you desire and as abundantly as you desire."

After Matins, the Saint retired again to rest and our Lord said to her: "She who wearies herself in exercises of charity, has a right to repose peacefully on the couch of charity," and as he said this, he soothed her soul so tenderly, that it appeared to her as if she did indeed repose on the bosom of this heavenly Bridegroom. Then she beheld a tree of charity, very high and very fair, covered with fruit and flowers and with leaves shin-

ing like stars which sprang forth from the heart of Jesus, extending and lowering its branches so as to surround and cover the nuptial couch in which the soul of Gertrude reposed. And she saw a spring of pure water gush forth from its roots, which shot upwards and then returned again to its source, and this refreshed her soul marvelously. By this she understood the divinity of Jesus Christ sweetly reposing in his humanity, which imparts ineffable joys to the charitable elect.

I have dwelled so long on this point, from the conviction that there is scarcely anything more apt to draw the blessing of God upon the priest than the careful and charitable attendance to the corporal and spiritual wants of the sick, whilst, on the other hand, the neglect of this duty is followed by many great evils.

There is a sick person, dejected, abandoned, a prey to sufferings and perhaps destitute even of the necessities of life, but especially of the most necessary of all blessings—true peace of conscience. The pains he suffers, those which he apprehends, perhaps the want of sympathy of those from whom he might naturally expect to receive charity—all this casts him into a profound melancholy ; nothing gives him any relief in his troubles and afflictions. In this sad condition, a true friend would be his greatest treasure. O priest of the Lord of mercy, make yourself worthy of this name in regard to an unfortunate person whom you alone are able to console. You know the titles and rights he has to your tender sympathy. He is a member of the spiritual family which God has confided to your care. He is your child. He holds a just claim upon all your solicitude, upon all the efforts of your zeal, because you are his pastor, and

therefore he expects you to sacrifice everything, even life itself, if necessary, to secure his salvation.

Do not be like a certain priest who came one day to console and encourage a dying person. He made a sad face, heaved a deep sigh and said at last : " I suppose you'll have to die. Well, you see, we must all die some day." That was all he could say. It is almost as consoling as the encouragement given by a certain pious author : " An ant can die," he says, " and why can't you die ?"

You say perhaps : " He is one of those rebellious sheep who has never listened to my voice. He is one of those scandalous persons who knew religion only to make it the object of their sacrilegious railleries, and the laws of God, only to trample upon them." Oh ! then if his faith returns to life, what must be his remorse of conscience, his terror, his anguish, at the approach of the terrible judgment which he is about to undergo !—" O no, he is too far gone in impiety to experience these salutary fears ; he is calm, and seems not to care at all for his eternal salvation. . . ." If this is true, O priest, your compassion must know no limits. It is only you who, in your paternal heart, and by the grace of the sacerdotal ministry, can find remedies proportioned to the extremity of the evil. Go immediately to Jesus Christ in the tabernacle in the church, pour out your prayers, lament, weep, cry, take the mercy of the Lord by storm, as it were, for this wretched soul ; represent to the Lord of all goodness how much this soul has cost him, put him in mind of his promise to hear our prayers for poor sinners ; tell him that it is peculiar to him to have mercy on them and to spare them and not to permit to see this sheep of his and yours to be devoured by the devil. Call especially on the

Blessed Virgin and remind her of her privileges, of her power of intercession, her goodness, etc., that no sinner is lost whom she undertakes to defend. Never will your charity be exercised with greater profit.

When in a state of flourishing health, man easily forgets God and the eternal truths. The affairs, the pleasures, the bustle and noise of the world, easily weaken his sentiments of faith. This, however, is not the case in the state of sickness. A man, when shut up in a room, confined to a couch of suffering, which he will probably not leave again except for the grave, commences to reflect more seriously and becomes better disposed for grace. His illusions disappear; he sees everything in its reality. The inability of all human means to protect him against death brings him back to the author of his being, reanimates his faith. . . . How many sick persons are there not, to whom are applicable the words of the Prophet: *Tribulationem et dolorem inveni et nomen Domini invocavi!* (Ps. cxiv, 3, 4). "I lived as if there had been no God. I never thought of his universal dominion, and of my dependence. I never cared about my duties towards him. . . . But tribulation has come upon me. I now see all terrestrial things and hopes disappear from before me; I now understand that to confide in creatures, is to confide in nothingness; I therefore turn my eyes towards the Lord; I fear his justice; I hope in his mercy, I call on him to assist me in my misery: *Et nomen Domini invocavi.*"

The picture of death, which frequently presents itself to the mind of the sick person, invites him to put his conscience in order. Come, pastor, he is disposed to listen to you. He will not apply to others what you are going

to tell him ; all your words will be applied to his wants. His seclusion, his experience of the vanity of human hopes, the lethargy of his passions, his sickness itself, which renders him more sensible to the marks of your affections, how many favorable circumstances unite for the pious designs and motives of your zeal ! Go then and the Lord, through your ministry, will be pleased to make his mercy shown in a most wonderful and most striking manner. It is painful to the Creator and Redeemer to lose forever the work of his hands and the price of his Blood. Often, at the approach of death, he displays a most extraordinary efficacy of his grace, in order to save souls most dear to him.

About twenty years ago, when the French troops were encamped around Gallipolis, the cholera burst suddenly upon them. They were unprepared for that terrible visitor. Father Gloriot, S. J., was alone in an army of ten thousand men. "I was obliged," says he, "to hear their confessions on my knees, and stooping by their couches. Indeed, I learned then that, to save souls for Jesus Christ, it is necessary to undergo, with him, the double agony of mind and body. Yet my greatest trial was my loneliness. I was alone ; I had not had the consolation of confession for six weeks past ; everybody died around me, and, should I be taken sick, there was none to assist me in my dying hour. But God, in his mercy, preserved me, that I might attend to the wants of souls so well prepared. The trials were certainly great, but great were also the consolations. Whenever I entered those places of desolation I was hailed from all parts—'Chaplain, here ! come here to me ! Make haste to reconcile me to God ! I have only a few moments to live !'

Some would press my hand to their hearts, and say, with grateful feelings : ‘ How providential for us that you are here ! Were you not with us, who would console us in our last moments ? ’ ”

But, you may say : “ How often have I not been called without necessity. So many exaggerate the urgency of the case, in order to force, as it were, the priest not to delay.”

No doubt, the patience of priests is often severely tried in such sick-calls. If the parishioners are religious and conscientious people, they will send for the priest even before they send for the doctor. Who can blame them for this ? Is it not better to send for the priest too soon than too late ? They think that after the priest has heard the sick person’s confession, the physician’s prescriptions will be more blessed by Almighty God. And they are right. Many a sickness is a punishment for sin. Remove the sin, and God will remove the punishment.

Bellucensis relates that a certain dying man, after making his confession, rose in perfect health from his bed ; and Thomas Cantipratensis tells us that a certain gentleman, after all remedies had failed, confessed his sins and immediately after was restored to health. I knew a certain Protestant physician who, whenever he was called to a sick Catholic, invariably told him to send for the priest and make a good confession to him, and “ then,” said he, “ I will prescribe medicine for you.” Experience had taught him that his medicine had a more wholesome effect upon a sick Catholic after having made his confession.

If a conscientious Catholic, if even Protestant physi-

cian, attaches such great importance to the priest's ministrations in sickness and at the hour of death, it would certainly be very wrong for a priest to attach less importance to his ministrations on such occasions. Suppose you had nine sick-calls, and none of them was urgent. Now, from these nine cases, you conclude that the tenth is not urgent either. So you delay your visit, and when, at last, you find it convenient to go, you go, but, to your great surprise, you are told that you came too late, that the sick person is dead. Remember, therefore, that the acquittal of nine guilty persons is a far less evil than the condemnation of one who is innocent. In like manner, it is better to obey a number of sick-calls made without urgent necessity, than, through some mistrust of them, to allow a person to die without the sacraments. The fault which you commit in this manner, is not like other faults, committed in the ministry. If you have failed in any of your other duties, the evil may be remedied ; but, if on account of your lukewarmness and want of zeal, a sick person leaves this world in the state of mortal sin, what an irreparable evil this ? You have failed to profit by the moment of salvation which the divine Mercy had reserved for that soul ; it will never return. That soul is judged and sentenced without appeal.

If the corpse of a poor man stretched out on the ground cries to heaven for vengeance upon the rich man who refused to give him bread, what terrible accusation will not this unfortunate reprobate soul bring against you before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. " Alas, Lord, he who was appointed by thee to be the eye of the blind, the foot of the lame, the guide of the traveller gone astray, the pastor to whom thou didst entrust the salvation of my

soul, abandoned me in the moment when the aid of his zeal was most necessary to me. It was his duty to enlighten me in my ignorance, to strengthen me in my weakness, to encourage me to suffer patiently my pains, to receive death as a just pain due to my sins. . . . Ah, had he but come to speak to me as a friend and a father, had he reminded me of the greatness of Thy mercy for the greatest sinners, I would have believed and repented of my sins. But no, at the moment in which my enemies surrounded me on all parts, he abandoned me most cruelly. Thou hast shed for me all Thy blood, and he refused to make a little sacrifice to apply it to my soul, that has cost thee so much !

What can be more painful for a priest than the thought that one of his parishioners has been deprived of the grace of the Last Sacraments through his want of zeal and charity in responding promptly to the sick-call? Non pavisti, occidisti. Tot occidimus, quot ad mortem ire quotidie tepidi et negligentes videmus ! (St. Greg.)

Who knows, if sudden death and privation of the Last Sacraments may not be for many priests the punishment reserved, in the judgments of God, for lack of zeal in attending the sick ?

Besides, no fault, committed by a priest in neglecting certain duties of his state, scandalizes the people more and makes them more averse to religion and to the clergy than the crime of a priest who abandons his sick parishioners and permits them unmercifully to fall into hell. If you are wanting in zeal in this capital point, your reputation is gone. Have as many other good qualities as you may, they will not be taken into consideration. To neglect but one dying person is to render yourself guilty

of a revolting cruelty, which covers you with infamy in the eyes of God and the people.

But, on the other hand, there is nothing that makes the pastoral ministry more respected, more esteemed, more loved, and gains for the priest the confidence and affection of the people better than his tender care and generous devotedness in the service of the dying. Such care is even admired by the wicked and the greatest infidels. Such care of the sick convinces them better of the divinity of our faith than all other arguments, and makes them renounce their indifferentism in religious matters to save their souls. In all our other functions, they see nothing extraordinary ; but when they see our assiduous care of the sick, our anxiety to aid them by day and by night, in spite of the great inclemency of the weather, the distance of places, the poverty of the dwellings, the lowliness of condition in life, without any other interest than that of their happiness to which we sacrifice our ease, sleep, comfort, health, life itself: then their admiration is excited, they are deeply touched and many become Catholics. Now, if your charity exercises so happy an influence over out-siders, how much more edifying is it not within the walls of the house filled with mourning, where you bring such Christian consolations. Surely, those children who saw, in your arms, their dearly beloved parents die, not only with resignation, but also full of confidence and joy, will never forget what you have done for them to sweeten the bitterness and mitigate the pain of separation.

There is a mother. She wept over her son as over one dead to the grace of God for several years, and by the care and solicitude of your paternal zeal, his last moments

were those of one predestined to life everlasting. . . . It is thus that you gain the respect, esteem and affection of your parishioners. The credit which you enjoy with them, adds new efficacy to your ministry. Most willingly do they believe the words of him who so well represents that God whom he preaches. They are docile to the voice of a pastor whom they love and by whom they know they are loved themselves. The promise of the Holy Ghost is accomplished. "*Non te pigeat visitare infirmum: ex his enim in dilectione firmaberis.*" (Ecclesi. vii, 39.)

Hence it is that the good pastor wishes to know by all means when and where his presence is required by his sheep. He desires every one in his parish to know that he has a paternal heart for all; that he has imposed upon himself the obligation to sacrifice all for their happiness, and that he is determined to comply with this duty; that far from feeling worried when he is called, at whatever hour it may be, he would rather feel mortified if he should notice that they had more regard for his rest and health, than for the salvation and consolation of the sick.

Thus it happens that he has never to grieve over having been called too late to a sick person, or over being received with coldness and diffidence which should never be inspired by so consoling a ministry. If it happens that he is sometimes called without necessity, he is on his guard not to manifest the least annoyance for fear that, on another occasion, the people might be afraid to send for him in time. Why should he complain? God does not wish him to do anything else in his honor as long as he is attending a sick-call. He has not lost his time. He gained, on the contrary, some time to devote it to the re-

cital of the Rosary, or to mental prayer, etc. He had a good opportunity to acquire a most precious gem for his celestial crown; the angels have counted his steps; God has seen his charity.

It is only a few years ago that a young Irish priest, then in the first year of his mission in this country, received what, to him, was literally the death-summons. He was lying ill in bed when the "sick-call" reached his house, the pastor of the district being absent. The poor young priest did not hesitate a moment: no matter what the consequence to himself might be the Catholic should not be without the consolations of religion. To the dismay of those who knew of his intention, and who remonstrated in vain against what to them appeared to be an act of madness, he started on his journey, a distance of thirty-six miles, which he accomplished on foot, in the midst of incessant rain. Ah! who can tell how often he paused involuntarily on that terrible march, or how he reeled and staggered as he approached its termination? Scarcely had he reached the sick man's bed, and performed the functions of the ministry, when he was conscious of his own approaching death; and there being no brother priest to minister to him in his last hour, he administered the viaticum to himself, and instantly sank on the floor a corpse.

The author of "The History of the Catholic Church in the United States" relates that Father O'Brien displayed all the qualities of a good pastor, whether in preaching the word of God to the faithful, or in visiting the sick during the ravages of the yellow fever, which for a time yearly desolated New York. The scourge was most severe in the summers of 1795 and 1798, and the good Father mul-

tiplied himself so as to leave none of his dear parishioners without religious succor. Among them he found a compassionate being, ever ready to devote himself to the care of the sick, in the person of a young negro, by the name of Peter Toussaint—his name deserves to be known and esteemed by all American Catholics, as it has been for sixty years by the whole population of New York. Peter Toussaint was born in 1766, on the plantation of Laticbonite, parish of St. Mark, in the island of St. Domingo. Son of a slave, himself a slave, he soon became the confidential servant of his master, Mr. John Berard; and when the revolution broke out in the island, the latter brought him to New York, where he left him with Madame Berard while he returned to the West Indies to collect the wreck of his fortune. But Mr. Berard died on the voyage, leaving his wife without any resources at New York. Toussaint was the sole support of his mistress, and he resolved to devote the whole fruit of his toil to her maintenance. He was very expert as a ladies' hairdresser, and by his intelligence and politeness he soon became the fashionable hairdresser to the best society in New York. Madame Berard, wishing to be no longer dependent on her slave's purse, subsequently married one of her countrymen, Mr. Nicolas, who, after being a rich planter in St. Domingo, was reduced to play the violin in the orchestras. Toussaint, however, did not consider himself exonerated from his duty to his mistress, and continued to place in her hands, no less eagerly than delicately, all his savings. Besides this, Toussaint found time to visit the sick in their houses, and the incidents related of his charity are as numerous as they are touching. One day he learned that a poor priest, just landed,

was languishing alone in a garret, a prey to the typhoid fever. Toussaint repaired to the spot, brought the sick man down to the street in his arms, procured a carriage, took him to his house, and nursed him till he recovered.

At another time the yellow fever was ravaging New York, and raged so violently in Maiden Lane that the police barricaded the ends of the street and caused the survivors to remove. Toussaint heard that a woman had been abandoned in one of the houses; he crossed the barrier, and took his place by her bed-side, lavishing every care upon her. In 1810 Madame Nicholas, on her death-bed, emancipated her faithful slave, and God blessed Toussaint's charity by enabling him to acquire a modest competence. He devoted the greater part of his income to good works, and not content with giving himself, he was always ready to go round with subscription lists for churches, convents, orphan asylums, anything that concerned religion and charity. When he thus solicited alms for others, he knocked at the doors of his old customers; and donations of many Protestant families to works essentially Catholic are due to the influence of Toussaint. Thus he lived doing good till the age of eighty-seven, and we are assured that for sixty years he never failed to hear Massevery morning. Having survived his wife and children, he left the principle part of his property to a lady who had been one of his kindest patrons, but whom an unfortunate marriage had reduced to the utmost misery. He died as he had lived, on the 30th of June, 1853, and a rich Protestant lady who attended his funeral thus describes it in a private letter to a friend: "I went to town on Saturday to attend Toussaint's funeral. High Mass, incense, candles, rich robes, sad and solemn music, were

there. The Church gave all it could give to prince or noble. The priest, his friend, Mr. Quin, made a most interesting address. He did not allude to his color, and scarcely to his station; it seemed as if his virtues as a man and a Christian had absorbed all other thoughts. A stranger would not have suspected that a colored man, of his humble calling, lay in the midst of us. He said no relative was left to mourn for him, yet many present would feel that they had lost one who always had wise counsel for the rich, words of encouragement for the poor, and all would be grateful for having known him. The aid he had given to the late Bishop Fenwick of Boston, to Father Powers, of our city, to all the Catholic institutions, was dwelt upon at large. How much I have learned of his charitable deeds which I had never known before! Mr. Quin said: 'There were left few among the clergy, superior to him in devotion and zeal for the Church and for the glory of God; among laymen, none.'"

Ah! how many priests who have neglected the sick will, on the day of judgment, be confounded by this saintly colored man!

CHAPTER XVI.

PRACTICAL METHOD OF ATTENDING THE DYING.

By St. Alphonsus Liguori.

1. To assist the dying to die well is a work of charity most pleasing to God, and most conducive to the salvation of souls, because at the hour of death on which the salvation of each person depends, the assaults of hell are most terrible, and the sick are least able to assist themselves. To show how pleasing to him it is to assist the dying, the Lord several times showed to St. Philip Neri, angels suggesting words to the religious who ministered to the sick.

2. The Roman Ritual says that one of the principal duties of a parish priest is to assist the dying. Hence it tells him that as soon as he learns that one of his parishioners is sick, he should visit him without waiting to be sent for, and that he should visit him frequently if the sick man be sick in soul as well as in body. And should he be unable to go in person, he ought to send another priest ; but he must be a pious and prudent priest. For, in attending the sick some priests do more injury than service to the dying, and to their own souls. The Ritual observes that when a priest cannot be had, the pastor should endeavor to get some pious and prudent layman to suggest pious sentiments to the dying.

3. The priest should endeavor to ascertain secretly from the physician, whether the disease is dangerous. I say secretly ; for a detestable practice exists among physi-

cians of holding out hopes of recovery to the sick, through fear of displeasing them or their relatives, as if to announce to a sick man the obligation of making his confession (which as soon as they perceive that he is in danger of death, they ought to intimate to him) were the same as to announce his death.

4. Secondly, the priest should endeavor to ascertain from the friends and relatives of the dying man, and also from himself, his natural dispositions and particularly whether he has to restore the goods or character of others, whether he has entertained hatred to any one, and whether he has kept up a criminal friendship, in order to apply a remedy to all his spiritual maladies. But without necessity the priest should not remind the sick man of the persons for whom he has entertained a hatred, or inordinate affection. With regard to those who have been wounded, the priest must be careful, after having induced them to forgive the person who inflicted the wound, not to ask about the cause, or occasion, or author of it. Should they speak on the subject, he must endeavor to change the topic. He should also take care not to speak to the sick without urgent necessity on worldly goods, on lawsuits, children, or any other irrelevant matter.

5. Thirdly, after he has ascertained that the disease is dangerous, he should not speak to the sick man about confession in the beginning, but should first ask him about his sickness and sufferings. Let him then exhort him to resign himself to the divine will, and to unite his pains with the pains of Jesus dying on the cross, and offer them in atonement for his sins. The priest should then by degrees dispose the sick man for confession, by

asking him how long it is since he was last at confession. He must then encourage him to hope that God will deliver him from his infirmity ; but let him at the same time prudently give him to understand that the disease is dangerous. He may observe to the sick man that too much credit is not to be given to physicians or relatives who hold out hopes of recovery through fear of disturbing him. Let him then say that it will be conducive even to his bodily health (if expedient for the salvation of his soul) to make a good confession while he has the use of his mental faculties.

6. Should the sick man ask to put off his confession, it is better to accede to his request, provided there is not imminent danger of death, or of lethargy, or of delirium. But the priest should fix the time for the confession ; for example, the evening, or following morning. But if the danger be imminent, let him say with St. Augustine, to the dying man, that God has promised pardon to penitent sinners, but that he has not promised them the to-morrow. Should the sick man obstinately refuse to make his confession, the priest should not desert him, but should from time to time exhort him to repentance, proposing at one time motives of terror, at another, motives of confidence. He should also procure for him the aid of public and private prayers

7. Fourthly, if the disease be far advanced, the priest should also exhort the sick man to adjust his temporal affairs, when this is necessary for the peace of the family, and still more when it is necessary for the tranquillity of his own conscience ; but the priest must take particular care not to expose himself to the danger of being charged with self-interested motives. If the dying man has sisters or

brothers in grievous need, it is right to admonish him that he is bound under pain of mortal sin to leave them at least as much of his property as is necessary to relieve their wants. But it does not appear that a person is bound by so strict an obligation towards relatives who are more remote. (See my Moral Theology, lib. 3. n. 946.) If the sick man wishes to leave anything for the benefit of his own soul, the priest should exhort him not to entrust the payment of it to his heirs, (for experience shows that few pious legacies are paid,) but rather to leave a certain sum for Masses, or for some other pious work. Let the priest take care not to give any counsel to the sick man, which may be prejudicial to others; for it does not become the ministers of Jesus Christ to draw upon themselves the hatred of others.

8. Fifthly, in the acts which he proposes to the illiterate, the priest should always speak in the vernacular; but in speaking to educated persons he may occasionally use Latin passages, taken from the Scriptures, but they should be short and calculated to excite compunction. The Ritual remarks that the priest should not molest the dying, as some do, who by exclamations, and by speaking too much, annoy the sick and add to the pain of the head with which they are afflicted. Father Recupito, of the Society of Jesus, relates of himself, that being once at the point of death, he understood nothing of what was said to him, but only heard a noise which tormented him so, that he was obliged to ask for a little repose.

9. Sixthly, besides the little images of Jesus crucified, and of most holy Mary, which he will have kept near the bed, the priest should also (if they can be had) have placed before the sick man, a large image of the Re-

deemer, and of the Blessed Virgin, that they may be always in his view, and that he frequently recommend himself to Jesus and Mary.

10. Seventhly, the priest should remove from the room of the sick man all dangerous objects; such as improper images, and above all, persons who might be an occasion of sin to him: these should be not only removed, but banished from the house. And when the dying man is near his agony, the priest should endeavor to remove from his chamber all persons whose assistance is not absolutely necessary. He should exclude from the room all relatives, lest their presence should excite any passion in the sick man.

Remedies against temptations.

11. The general remedies against all temptations are frequently to invoke the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, and frequently to make on one's self the sign of the cross; but for some particular temptations, it will be useful to give some particular remedies.

12. First, with regard to the temptations against *faith*. This temptation (which is the most terrible of all) generally assails those particularly who have led a dissolute life; and especially men of learning who are attached to their own opinion. They must be told that, if the devil suggests any doubt or proposes any subtle objection, they should not argue with him, but answer in general terms by saying: *I believe what the holy Church believes, which believes the truth*, that they should thank God for having made them be born in the bosom of the holy Church, and should protest that in the Catholic faith they wish to live and die. The best means of banishing such

temptations is to turn the mind to other acts, such as acts of contrition, of confidence, of the love of God, and the like. Bellarmine relates that a certain learned man, in consequence of beginning at death to dispute with the devil on a point of faith, was defeated by his adversary, and was lost.

13. But should the temptation continue to molest him, he ought to say that the proofs of our faith (so just and holy in itself, propagated by a few fishermen, in spite of so many persecutions, and confirmed by so many miracles, and by so many millions of martyrs, who have given their lives for it) are so clear, that they make its truth evident, though they do not render clear the mysteries which it teaches. Were the mysteries which faith teaches evident to us, where would be the merit of faith. "Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt." (Joan xx, 29.)

14. Secondly, the temptation to despair is one of the principal temptations with which hell most fiercely combats the dying. Hence it is seldom expedient to speak to them of the divine justice, of the pains of the damned, or of the grievousness of their sins; the priest should rather suggest to them sentiments of confidence in the mercy of God, in the passion of Jesus Christ, in the divine promises, and in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

15. The first motive, then, of our hope, is the divine mercy; for God is called *the Father of mercies*. (2 Cor. i, 3.) He goes to meet even those who do not seek him." "Invenerunt qui non quæsierunt me." (Isa. lxv, 1.) He desires our salvation more ardently than we ourselves desire it. Hence, as St. Bernard says, he complains that he is abandoned even by those whom he seeks to embrace;

“Amplecti quærit a quibus desertum esse queritur.” All his inclinations lead him to pardon our offences: “Multus est ad ignoscendum.” He protests that he wishes not the death of a sinner: “Nolo mortem impii, sed ut convertatur.et vivat.” He declares that when a sinner repents he forgets all his sins. “If the wicked do penance for all his sins. I will not remember all his iniquities.” (Ezech. xviii, 21.) After these protestations, who can ever diffide in the divine mercy? A single act of sorrow is sufficient to obtain for us the pardon of an infinite number of our sins. By merely saying, *be merciful to me a sinner*, the publican was justified. As soon as he cast himself at his father’s feet, the prodigal son was embraced by him. The instant David said, *I have sinned*, the prophet said to him: *the Lord also hath taken away thy sin.* (2 Kings xii, 13.)

16. The second motive of confidence is the passion of Jesus Christ, who has declared that he came to save sinners: “I am not come to call the just but sinners.” (Mat. ix, 13.) He protests that he will not reject any one who casts himself at his feet: “Them that come to me I will not cast out.” (Joan vi, 37.) He says that he goes in search of the lost sheep (Mat. xviii, 12), and that when he finds one of them he rejoices, he embraces it, and places it on his own shoulders. He appears to treat penitent sinners with special tenderness, as we learn from the life of St. Mary of Egypt, of Blessed Angela of Foligno, of St. Margaret of Cortona, and of many other sinful souls. He, then, who has a good will, ought not to be afraid of that Lord who, in order not to condemn us, has condemned himself to die on a cross.

17. The divine promises are the third motive of con-

fidence. In several passages of the Gospel the divine grace is promised to all who ask it : “ Ask and you shall receive.” (John, xvi, 24.) “ Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name he will give it you.” (John xvi, 23.) This promise has been made to all, whether saints or sinners. “ Every one that asketh receiveth.” (Mat. vii, 8.) In order, then, to obtain the graces necessary for eternal life, it is enough to ask them : “ The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.” (Lam. iii, 25.)

18. The fourth motive is the intercession of the saints, and particularly of the divine Mother, whom God wishes that we, with the holy Church, salute as our refuge, our life, and our hope, saying, *Refuge of sinners, pray for us ; our life, our hope, hail !* Hence she is justly called the hope of those that are in despair: *Spes desperantium*, (Blosius); the hope of the abandoned: *Adjutrix destitutorum*, (St. Ephrem). Mary herself revealed to St. Bridget, that as a mother seeing her child surrounded by enemies, courageously defends him against their attacks, so she defends against the assaults of the devil the souls that recommend themselves to her protection. She also said to the same saint, that when a sinner invokes her aid, she attends not to the grievousness of his sins, but to the intention with which he comes. And God himself revealed to St. Catharine of Sienna, that he had given to Mary this privilege, that when a sinner has recourse to her, he cannot be carried away by the devil.

19. Remedies against temptations to *vain-glory*. St. Bernard says that vain-glory is a dart which *leviter penetrat, sed non leviter vulnerat*. It is particularly dangerous to persons who have performed many good works. Hence,

should the priest see that the dying man is too secure of his salvation, that he trusts in the works he has performed, he ought to say to him that our sins only are ours; that all our good comes from God. “*What hast thou that thou hast not received?*” The priest may add, that no one is infallibly certain of being in the state of grace: “Man knowest not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.” (Eccl. ix, 1.) And that therefore every one should tremble, and should endeavor to work out his salvation with fear and trembling: “Cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini.” (Phil. ii, 12.)

20. Against temptations to *impatience*. To those who are impatient under the pains of sickness, the priest should represent the great sufferings of the martyrs, some of whom have been skinned alive, cut in pieces, or burnt to death on a slow fire. Above all, let him place before them all the torments of the innocent Jesus, who has, for the love of us, suffered more than all the martyrs. He may say to the dying man, that the pains of sickness cannot be avoided, and that if he yields to impatience under them, he will add to his sufferings here, and to his chastisement hereafter: but that if, on the other hand, he accepts them for God’s sake, he will lessen his pains in this life, and in purgatory, and will be rewarded for his patience in paradise. “Your sorrows shall be turned into joy.” (John xvi, 20.) The pains of the last illness complete our eternal crown; for, as St. Bonaventure says, to suffer pain with patience, is more perfect than all other good works. “Patience hath a perfect work.” (James i, 4.) It is thus that God treats his greatest friends in this life; for the cross is the most secure mark of predestination. St. Clare was afflicted with the severest pain for twenty-

eight years. St. Lidwine was for thirty-eight years a constant martyr to sickness. The Blessed Virgin said once to St. Bridget: "Do you know why your sickness is so much prolonged? It is because my Son and I love you." "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv, 17.) "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii, 28.)

21. Hence it is necessary to exhort the sick to be resigned in all things to the divine will, and in order to conform to it, to submit patiently not only to the pains of sickness, but also to the mistakes of the physician, and the negligence of the attendants. And the priest should be particularly careful to exhort the sick man to pray to God for holy patience.

22. Fifthly, to the young who feel a difficulty in accepting a premature death, the priest should represent the miseries of the present life, the maladies, rancors, and, above all, the dangers of sin and perdition, to which men are exposed in this world. Hence the saints have so ardently desired death. St. Teresa used to say: "In every moment of my life, I may lose God." Hence when she heard the clock strike, she was filled with consolation, because she knew that another hour of danger was over. The holy martyrs went with joy to death, through the desire of being delivered from the fear and dangers of perdition, and of going to enjoy God. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. . . . that they may rest from their labors." (Apoc. xiv, 13.) In this world we are but pilgrims. "We have not here a lasting city." (Heb. xiii, 14.) Every one must die.

23. Let the priest exhort the sick man to thank God for not having taken him out of life when he was in sin, and for granting him the grace to die with the benefit of the holy sacraments, and with so many hopes of eternal salvation. In this life we always offend God, at least by light faults ; hence in order to be freed from such defects, we ought to accept and even to desire death. We should resign ourselves to the will of God, who wishes what is best for us. *Who knows, my brother,* (the priest should say,) *that if you recover you will not lose your soul ?* The sick man will say : *I would wish to live a little longer, in order to do penance for my sins, and to do something for God. Hitherto I have done nothing for him.* The priest may answer that no penance is more pleasing to God than to accept death with cheerfulness in atonement for our sins, and that there is no act more perfect, and more pleasing to God than to accept death in order to do his will.

24. Remedies against *attachment to worldly goods, and to relatives.* To those who are unwilling to die, because they are attached to worldly goods, the priest may say that these are not true goods, that they are transitory goods, which will soon pass away, and which when possessed give pain rather than contentment. The true goods which fully content the soul, and never fail, are the goods which God prepares for us in heaven.

25. Should the sick man be afflicted at the thought of leaving his wife or children, or any person for whom he entertains an affection, let the priest say to him : *My brother, we must all die ; attend now to the salvation of your soul, and you will pray for them in heaven ; and will also be happy along with them for all eternity.* What

can be more delightful than to go to remain with God, with Jesus Christ, with your mother, Mary, and with all the saints of paradise?

26. Should the sick man be afflicted at leaving his family in poverty, the priest may say to him: *If you save your soul, as I hope you will, you will be better able to assist your family in heaven than you would in this life. Doubt not but that God who feeds the birds of the air, will not neglect to provide for your relatives. If you love them, God loves them still more.*

27. Remedies against temptations to *hatred or revenge*. With regard to those who are tempted to hatred on account of an insult which they have received, it is necessary to remind them, first, of the divine precept: *love your enemies*. Secondly, that he who does not pardon others, cannot hope for pardon from God, who says: "Without are dogs." (Apoc. xxii, 15.) Dogs, the symbol of the vindictive, are cast out of heaven. But on the other hand, God promises certain pardon to them who pardon others: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke vi, 37.) Thirdly, the priest must say to them: *If your enemies have injured you, how much more have you injured God? If, then, you expect pardon from God, how much more ought you pardon your neighbors?* "Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also." (Col. iii, 13.) Lastly, the priest should show the sick man how much the person who forgives an injury pleases God. St. John Gualbertus, after having pardoned the murderer of his brother, saw the image of Jesus crucified, bowing its head as if to thank him. St. Stephen prayed for those who stoned him to death. St. James before death embraced his accuser. St. Lewis of France took to

his table the man who had made an attempt on his life. St. Ambrose supported for a long time an assassin who lay in wait to kill him. But above all, Jesus Christ, who prayed on the cross for his crucifiers, gave the first example of the pardon of injuries.

The Last Sacraments.

1. *Confession.*—In my Moral Theology, (lib. 6, n. 89,) I have taught that when there is proximate danger of death, and the confession is long, there is not an obligation of making it entire. Let it be here observed, first, that at death every priest, as the Council of Trent has declared (Sess. 14, cap. 7), can absolve from all reserved sins and censures; and not only in the article of death, but also when there is danger of death, as I have proved (lib. 6, n. 561). But when the sick man has incurred a reserved censure, the priest should impose on him an obligation of presenting himself to his superior, should he recover; otherwise he will fall back into the censures. (N. 563.)

Secondly, a simple priest cannot absolve in the presence of an approved confessor, unless he has begun the confession before the arrival of the approved confessor: “aut nisi approbatus sit complex personæ infirmæ in peccato turpi, uti decrevit Summus Pontifex Benedictus XIV, 1. c. n. 553.

Thirdly, a dying man deprived of his senses, may be absolved at least conditionally, (which appears to be always safest,) when there is any one to attest that he had manifested a desire of absolution, by giving signs of repentance, or that he had asked for a confessor. (Lib. 6, n. 471.) The dying may be absolved conditionally, even

when deprived of their senses in the act of sin, as may be proved by the authority of St. Augustine, and by reason ; for on the one hand, the condition takes away the danger of irreverence to the sacrament, and on the other, it is presumed that at the moment of death, every one wishes to provide for his eternal salvation, and that he gives some external sign of his desire, though, on account of his illness, it is not perceived.

2. *Communion*.—As to the Communion, the following admonitions are to be attended to. First, in order to administer the viaticum, it is not necessary to wait until there is no hope of recovery ; it may be received whenever there is danger of death. (Lib. 5, n. 284.) Secondly, when there is proximate danger of vomiting, it is not lawful to give the viaticum, even though the sick man had received and retained an unconsecrated particle. (N. 282.) Thirdly, the viaticum may be given to children who have the use of reason ; it may also be given to persons laboring under madness, when it is known that they have led a holy life, or that they have been at confession a short time before, provided there is not danger of irreverence to the holy sacrament. Hence with such persons it is probable that it is lawful to try, whether there is danger of irreverence, by giving them an unconsecrated particle. (Loc. cit.) Fourthly, it may and ought to be given to the dying on Good Friday, as appears from a decree of the Congregation of Rites. (19th Feb., 1622.)

Fifthly, it is the common opinion of theologians, that the viaticum may be given several times in the same sickness, at least every six or eight days. Many hold that it may be given more frequently. (N. 284, 285.) If the dying man had communicated in the morning, through

devotion, he cannot receive the viaticum on the same day, unless the danger of death proceeded from some sudden illness, caused by a wound, by poison, or by a fall, &c. (N. 285, dub. 3.)

Sixthly, when the sick man has only made his confession, and the disease continues to be dangerous, the priest should prepare him to receive the viaticum as soon as possible, that he may receive it with more perfect use of his senses, and with greater fruit. Hence the priest should endeavor to excite in the sick man a desire of receiving the holy viaticum, in order to fortify himself against hell in the dangers to which he is exposed; and to unite himself to Jesus Christ, who wishes to come to him in order to enrich him with treasures of grace, and to accompany him to heaven if the time of his death has arrived, or if expedient for him, to restore his health. St. Cyril of Alexandria says that the holy Eucharist—"Etiam depellit morbos, et ægrotos sanat." And St. Gregory Nazianzen relates, that his father, as soon as he had received Holy Communion, was restored to health.

Hence the priest may thus address the sick man: *My brother, your illness is not desperate, but it is dangerous, and therefore you would do well to receive, as soon as possible, Holy Communion: for Jesus Christ will restore your bodily health, if it is conducive to your eternal salvation and if you are to die, he will come to give you strength against the temptations of the devils, and to accompany you to paradise. What do you say? Do you desire to receive him! Yes: Prepare then to embrace your Redeemer, who has died for the love of you. Say to him with love: come, my Jesus, come my love, my only good, come to my soul, which desires to receive Thee. "Quid mihi est in cælo,*

et a te quid volui super terram? Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus et in ternum."

When he is going to administer the viaticum, the priest may say to the sick person : *As soon as St. Philip Neri saw the most Holy Sacrament brought into his room, he exclaimed : "Behold my love." This, my brother, I wish you also to say. Behold the Son of God, who, for the love of you, has descended from heaven on earth, and has voluntarily died for your sake ; and now comes to visit you. Rejoice, for he has already pardoned you. Of the offences you committed, you have already repented, and you continue to be sorry for them. You now love God with your whole heart : do you not ? Say, then : yes, my Jesus, I love Thee ; and because I love Thee, I am sorry for having offended Thee : for the love of Thee I accept death ; behold, I offer myself to Thee : I even desire to die, if such be Thy pleasure, that I may go to see and love Thee forever in paradise.*

The priest will then say to him : *Brother N., since you love Jesus Christ, you pardon for his sake all those who have offended you : do you not ? and you also ask pardon of all for the offences you have offered them. Turn to Jesus Christ, who now wishes to embrace you : say to him with your whole heart : "Lord, I am not worthy." But notwithstanding your unworthiness, he wishes to come to you. Invite him, then, saying : My Jesus, my love, my all, I wish for nothing but Thee.*

After the sick man has communicated, the priest will do well to assist him to make his thanksgiving. Brother, the priest will say, *thank Jesus Christ, who has so lovingly come to embrace you. The most Holy Sacrament is called the pledge of paradise. Rejoice ; God wishes to*

give you heaven, and, therefore, he has given you himself as a pledge of future glory. Say with me :

My Lord, my love, I embrace Thee, I thank Thee, I love Thee, and I hope to love Thee for eternity : I am sorry for having offended Thee, and I purpose to spend all the remaining moments of my life, be they few or many, in loving Thee.

My Jesus, I offer Thee my life, if Thou wishest to deprive me of it. Thy will be always done. Give me, I pray Thee, only holy perseverance, and Thy love, that I may die loving Thee, and that I may go to love Thee forever in heaven. Thou wilt not abandon me, I will never abandon Thee : we will then love each other, forever, O God of my soul.

Extreme Unction.—As Extreme Unction is the last sacrament, so it is the crown and completion of the spiritual life. By it man is prepared to enter the glory of heaven. Hence the sick ought to receive it while they have the use of their senses, that they may receive it with greater fruit ; for although this sacrament can be received only when there is great (at least probable) danger of death, (lib. 6, n. 714. dub. 4,) still it should not be deferred until the dying man is on the point of expiring. Hence the Roman Catechism says that the priest is guilty of a grievous sin, if he defers the Extreme Unction until there is no hope of life, and the sick man begins to lose the use of his senses.

The priest then should endeavor to persuade the sick, that Extreme Unction will, as the Council of Trent has declared, restore bodily health, if it be conducive to the welfare of the soul. “*Interdum sanitatem corporis consequitur ubi salutis animæ expedierit.*” (Sess. 14, cap. 2.) But this sacrament does not restore health when the

disease has gone so far that it cannot be cured by natural means. John Erolodus relates, that a certain deceased man had revealed to a person, that, had he received Extreme Unction at an earlier stage of his illness, he would have recovered ; but on account of having deferred it he died, and was condemned to purgatory for a hundred years.

Secondly, Extreme Unction will take away the remains of sins, and consequently it will also, according to St. Thomas, take away occult mortal sins. (Lib. 6, n. 731.) Hence the pastor should tell the sick man to excite sorrow for the sins committed by each sense, while the priest is anointing that sense, and to answer with the others who are present : *Amen*.

Thirdly, it will give special helps against temptations, in the last conflict with hell. Hence it is very probable that a person who would refuse to receive this sacrament, cannot be excused from grievous sin. (N. 101.)

It will be useful, then, to give some instructions regarding the administration of this sacrament. First, the opinion of those who say that a sick man can be anointed with a single drop of holy oil, without any diffusion of the oil over the part anointed, is not practically probable, for that would not be a true unction. (N. 709.) The anointing of the five senses is, according to the more common opinion, necessary for the sacrament. Hence a single unction, and in one of the senses only, cannot be permitted, except in time of pestilence, or in cases of imminent danger of death.

In such cases it would be better to anoint the head, only conditionally, and to use only one form, saying : " Per istam sanctam unctionem et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Deus quidquid deliquisti per sen-

sus, nempe per visum, auditum, gustum, odoratum et tactum." Should the sick man survive, the five senses should be anointed (conditionally), and the usual prayers should be recited. It is not necessary for the sacrament to anoint the two organs of sense: it is even lawful to anoint only one eye, or one hand, &c., when there is danger of infection, or any other necessity; as, for example, when the sick man cannot be turned from one side to the other. The anointing of the loins is omitted in giving the extreme unction to females, and also to men *quando infirmus commodè moveri non potest*; as the Roman Ritual prescribes. It is the common opinion, that the anointing of the feet is not necessary for the sacrament: with regard to that, the custom of churches is to be followed. The order of the unctions is not essential; but it is a grievous sin not to observe it. The extreme unction may be given to children who have the use of reason, although they are not as yet prepared for Holy Communion; but when it is doubtful whether a child has attained the use of reason, the sacrament may be given conditionally, but not to those who are entirely destitute of the use of reason. (N. 719, 720.)

Fifthly, when there is not danger of irreverence, it may be given to those who have lost the use of reason, or labor under madness, or delirium, if when they had the use of reason, they asked, or probably would have asked, for Extreme Unction, or if they have given signs of contrition, particularly if they have occasional lucid intervals. When the priest has reason to doubt whether a person had ever attained the use of reason, he may then give Extreme Unction conditionally—*Idem de ebriis, si in mortis periculo sint, nisi tamen constet eos in mortali culpa fuiss,*

cum sensus ipsi amiserint. To the impenitent, and to those who manifestly die in sin, and also to those who are excommunicated, this sacrament should be refused, as the Roman Ritual directs. To women in proximate danger of death from the pains of childbirth, it may be given.

Sixthly, in cases of necessity, all the prayers, except the form of the sacrament, are omitted: if there is time, they shall be said afterwards. In such cases, the sacrament may be administered without lights, without a minister, and probably without stole and surplice.

Seventhly, according to the Council of Trent, (Sess. 14, c. 3,) Extreme Unction cannot be repeated in the same sickness, unless it is at least probable that the sick man has recovered from his illness, and has again fallen back into another danger of death.

Eighthly, the priest should be cautious in moving the sick in order to anoint the parts prescribed; but should he carefully turn him in the bed, and thus accidentally cause death, he need not be afraid of having fallen into an irregularity: for, in such a case, an irregularity can be contracted only *ex delicto*, which a person who acts inculpably from a motive of charity, does not commit.

Lastly, it is probable that a parish priest can keep the Holy Oil in his own house during the night, if he has probable reason to fear that otherwise he would not be in time to give the sacrament to a dying person.

Agony and Death.

As soon as the last agony has begun, the priest should avail himself of the arms of the Church, to assist the dying man according to the best of his ability.

First, he should frequently sprinkle the sick man with holy water, (particularly if he is assailed with diabolical apparitions,) saying: "Exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici ejus" Secondly, he should frequently make the sign of the cross on the dying man, and bless him, saying: "Benedicat te Deus Pater qui te creavit; benedicat te Filius qui te redemit: benedicat te Spiritus Sanctus qui te sanctificavit." Thirdly, he should frequently make him kiss the crucifix, and an image of Mary. Fourthly, he should make him gain as many indulgences as possible, by the use of medals, scapulars, &c.; and he should be particularly careful to give the dying the benediction, *in articulo mortis*, to which Benedict XIV annexed a plenary indulgence. Fifthly, the priest should, now and then, suggest to the dying some sentiment of contrition, of resignation, of oblation of his pains, of confidence in the passion of Jesus Christ, and in the intercession of Mary, of desire of seeing God; but these sentiments should be suggested slowly, and with interruptions, that the dying may have time to reflect on what has been said, and to repose. Sixthly, the priest should make the dying frequently invoke (at least with the heart, if they are unable to speak) the most holy names of Jesus and Mary. Seventhly, during the agony, the priest should make those who are present frequently say the Litany of the Blessed Virgin for the dying man. He would also do well to give a signal to the people, by a certain number of tolls of the bell, that a person is in the last agony, that they may pray for him: this might be useful even to those who are in health. And here I say, as a general rule, that when the dying man has lost his senses, it will be more useful to assist him by prayers

than by words. Eighthly, when the dying man is near death, the priest, kneeling at the foot of the bed, should recite, in a low tone, the prayers of the Church—*Proficiscere, &c., Suscipe, &c.*, which are at the end of the ritual and breviary. Ninthly, he should be cautious in touching the nose, the hands or feet of the dying man, to try whether they are cold; for this (at least if frequently repeated) might disturb him. He must be also careful not to move the sick during the agony, for motion might cause his death. Tenthly, when the dying man is near his last passage, the priest should make him hold (at least for some time) the blessed candle lighted, as a sign of his wish to die in the faith. Eleventhly, if the dying man be in his senses, the priest will do well to give him absolution several times, after a short instruction, in order to render his justification the more secure, and to repair past confessions, if they had been null, or at least, to make him acquire an increase of grace, and to diminish the pains of purgatory. And if the dying man should fall into mortal sin, the priest ought not to speak to him in a manner calculated to excite terror, but should exhort him, (if he is tempted again,) to call on Jesus and Mary; should get him to make an act of sorrow, and absolve him immediately. If the sick man has lost his senses, and does not give any sign of repentance, or of asking absolution, it is not right to repeat it very often. For to give absolution conditionally, (as is the practice in such cases,) always requires a serious cause. Hence, in such cases, a notable time should elapse between one absolution and another. In this, the priest must be regulated by his knowledge of the conscience of the sick man; for example, if he has had a habit of bad thoughts, if he

is dying in consequence of a wound, if he has been subject to violent hatred, or to unchaste love, if his illness be very painful, and he has but little patience, the absolution may be given to him more frequently : in other cases it will be enough to give it every three or four hours ; but more frequently if he is near death. The priest will do well to tell the sick man (while he has the use of his senses) after he has lost his speech, to give some determinate external sign as often as he wishes for absolution, or as often as the priest wishes to give it to him ; for example, to close his eyes, to incline his head, to raise the hand, and the like.

Lastly, when the sick man appears to have expired, the priest should take care not to say immediately that he is dead ; much less should he close his eyes or mouth, or cover his face ; for the sick man might not be dead, and his death might be thus accelerated. When it is certain that the soul has gone to eternity, the priest will tell those who are present to recommend the departed soul to God, and kneeling down he will say the prayer, *Subvenite*, &c., which he will find in the Ritual or Breviary.

When the sick man is about to expire.

Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. My Jesus, I recommend to Thee this soul, which Thou hast purchased with Thy blood.

[Observe that when the dying man is near his last moment, the acts should be suggested without pausing, and in a louder voice.]

O Lord Jesus Christ, receive my spirit.

My God, assist me, permit me to go to love Thee for eternity.

My Jesus, my Love, I love Thee, I repent, &c.

Oh ! that I had never offended Thee.

Mary, my Hope, assist me : pray to Jesus for me.

Through Thy passion, save me, O my Jesus : I love Thee.

Mary, my Mother, assist me at this moment. St. Joseph, come to my aid. St. Michael, the archangel, defend me. My angel guardian, assist me. My holy patron, N., [here mention the principal advocate of the dying man,] recommend me to Jesus Christ. All ye saints of heaven, pray to God for me.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

Jesus and Mary, to you I give my heart and my soul.

Imminentia Mortis Signa.

Opus est ut sacerdos qui hoc charitatis opus exercet imminentia mortis signa sciat, ut ita ægroto jam expiranti melius auxiliari possit. Præcipua et universalia sunt tria : 1. Pulsus deficiens, intermittens et formicans. 2. Respiratio anxia. 3. Oculi excavati, et vitreatri, aut apertiores solito, vel minus lucidi, vel qui respiciunt objecta diverse quam aliis apparent, ut cum palpebra superior relaxatur, et inferiorem prætergreditur.

Sunt etiam proxima mortis signa nasus acuminatus, et in extremitate albescens, et si nares ad instar folliis sufflant ; manus tremantes, ungues lividæ ; facies flavescens, livida et mutata ; flatus male olens et frigidus ; corpus immobile, sudo frontis et frigidus ; calor in cordis parte nimius ; festucas aut lanugines colligere ; frigiditas in extremis omnibus partibus.

Signa tamen proximiora expirationi sunt respiratio intermittens aut languida ; defectio pulsus, dentium

contractio, stridor; distillatio in gena; lene quoddam suspirium, aut gemitus; lachryma per se fluens, oris, oculorum et totius corporis torsio.

Advertatur, 1. quod laborantes hydrope, hectica febris, vel vulnere, asthmate, pleuritide, sanguinis fluxu, vomitu, angina, et rheumatismo, interdum cum paucis nominatorum signorum, et cum pulsu valido ac loquentes expirare soleant. Advertatur 2. proximos morti esse, qui pleuritide laborant, dum respirationis difficultas, anhelitus augmentum et labia livida apparent. Vulnerati capite interdum subitaneo deliquio moriuntur. Hydropici, dum pulsus deficit, et anhelitus crescit, ac in ore spuma apparet. Qui febris intermittente laborant, mori solent in principio accessionis, dum convulsiones vehementes sunt. Advertatur 3. quod in aliquibus ægrotis flatus sit adeo debilis, et cordis exagitatio, ut jam mortui videantur, et tamen non sint. Signa certiora mortis sunt omnium partium frigiditas etiam in regione cordis, corporis gravitas, alicujus spiritus naribus admoti stimulum non sentire, speculum ori admotum non maculari, et similia. Demum advertatur, quod interdum signa superius in primo loco adducta fallant, et etiam sine illis repente moriatur infirmus; et ideo dum ægrotus in agone manet, sacerdos nunquam illum deserat.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREAT MEANS TO REFORM A PARISH.—MISSIONS.

First means—*Missions*. Holy missions are a continued Redemption which the Son of God, through his ministers, operates on earth without interruption. They are as it were the support of the Church; they maintain her fervor, separate the chaff from the wheat, fortify the weak, confirm the strong, raise up the fallen, disperse the darkness of error, dispel the illusions of hell, repair sacrilegious confessions, bring about the restitution of ill-gotten goods, put a stop to scandals, at least for a time, prepare for death those whom it shall please God to call to himself during the course of the year; they become even for such as relapse a starting point for some future amendment; in a word, it may be truly asserted that the missions are the principal if not the only protection and powerful means to preserve faith and to establish it solidly on the rock which is Jesus Christ. “Missions,” says St. Alphonsus, “are one of the greatest benefits of divine Providence that has, in these corrupt times, established this most efficacious means of saving souls that are miserably sunk in the mire of sin.”

In fact, experience shows what abundance of graces the divine Majesty usually bestows upon missions, so that through them are effected the most extraordinary, nay, even the most wonderful conversions, not only of individuals, but of whole cities which, like Babylon in wickedness, have been changed by the missions into

heavenly sanctuaries. For this reason St. Alphonsus wrote to the Fathers of his congregation:

“My dearest Brothers in Jesus Christ:—The principal thing which I recommend to you is the love of Jesus Christ. Too much are we bound to love him. He has snatched us from the midst of the world, in order that, during the pilgrimage of this life, we might think of nothing but of pleasing him, and of bringing those crowds of people to love him, who every year, by means of our ministry, abandon sin, and put themselves into the grace of God. It is generally the case that when we begin a mission, a great number of the people of the place are in enmity with God, and deprived of his love; but five or six days have scarcely elapsed when, behold, numbers, as if roused from a deep sleep, begin to listen to the exhortations, the instructions, and the sermons; and when they see that God offers them his mercy, they begin to weep over their sins, and conceive the desire of being reconciled to him. The way of pardon is opened before them, and seeing it, they begin to abhor that manner of life which they had previously loved; a new light begins to shine upon them, and a peace hitherto unknown touches their hearts. Then they think of going to confession, to remove from their souls those vices which kept them separated from God; and whereas before a Mass of a quarter of an hour appeared to them too long, and five decades of the Rosary too tedious, and a sermon of a half an hour unbearable, now they gladly hear a second and a third Mass, and they are sorry when the sermon, which has lasted an hour and a half, or perhaps two hours, is over. And we are the instruments of whom the Lord makes use to work such wondrous changes, and to bring the people to

delight in those very things which before they despised? So that when the mission is over, we leave in the place two or three thousand persons to love God, with whom before they were living in enmity, and were not even thinking of recovering his grace."

Now, next to the grace of God, these wonderful changes brought about in the people by means of the missions were also owing to the manner in which St. Alphonsus wished the Fathers of his congregation to give missions. He prescribed for them the subjects of which they should treat in their sermons, such as the end of man, the importance of salvation, mortal sin, impurity, drunkenness, infidelity, death, judgment, hell, God's mercy, delay of conversion, the Church, her authority, her priesthood, her sacraments, especially those of penance and Holy Eucharist, perseverance, heaven, the mercy and power of intercession of the Blessed Mother of God, etc.

St. Alphonsus prescribed for his missionaries the subjects of the instructions to be given to the people, such as the commandments of God and of the Church, the duties of the different states of life, the occasions of sin, prayer, the devotion of the holy Rosary, the frequent use of the sacraments.

The Redemptorist Fathers give also instructions to the different classes of society—to the married men and women, to the young men and young women of the parish, to parents in regard to the education of children, to masters and servants.

The Missionary Fathers give also special instructions to the children of the parish who are not able to profit by the course of the spiritual exercises of the mission. They thus place themselves in a very intimate relation with the

whole parish and render themselves quite popular. The people are highly delighted at seeing the missionaries so solicitous about their spiritual welfare.

St. Alphonsus prescribed also for his missionaries the manner and style in which they must preach and give instructions. "Nothing," he says, "is more true than the saying of the Apostle that faith in Jesus Christ is spread and preserved through the ministry of preaching. If we, therefore, wish to bring back souls to God and secure an entrance into the hearts of sinners, there can be no doubt that we must preach in the same manner as did Jesus Christ and his apostles; namely, in a simple and popular manner, having Jesus in our hearts and on our lips; "*non in persuasibilibus humane sapientie verbis*, not in the persuasive words of human wisdom" (1 Cor. ii, 4), not in harmonious periods nor in far-fetched, merely ornamental expressions. The Redemptorist Fathers are forbidden under the severest penalties to adopt in their sermons an affected pronunciation, to bring forward arguments that serve no other purpose than to gratify the vanity of the speaker, or to use long and intricate periods, as is usually done by the enemies of Jesus Christ and by those who love themselves and are given to vanity; on the contrary, they are commanded to preach Jesus crucified in an apostolic manner, in simple and popular language, in order to be understood by all classes of hearers, especially by the uneducated. This manner of preaching nourishes with the food of the divine Word all the hearers, without exception, the great and the little, the high and the low, the learned and the unlearned, the old and the young.

All the Fathers are, by virtue of their rules, earnest-

ly exhorted scrupulously to avoid introducing any other style, or to depart in their sermons from the simplicity of language which through the grace of Jesus Christ was introduced from the beginning into their society. However, while aiming at simplicity of language, the Redemptorist Fathers are to remember that by the precept of the rule to preach in a simple and popular style, another command is by no means set aside,—the command, namely, to advance only solid and convincing arguments, to observe purity of style and language in the vernacular, as well as clearness of arrangement. It will be clear to every one that a series of apostolic sermons on the great eternal truths and a regular, well-prepared course on the different duties of life and the great means of salvation are, with the grace of God, apt to enlighten the minds of the hearers, touch their hearts and induce their will to give up sin and lead truly Christian lives.

Moreover, St. Alphonsus prescribed also *prayer and pious practices* for the success of the mission. “Sermons,” says St. Alphonsus, “will produce but little fruit in a soul that does not pray. Prayer is the great means of salvation.” Hence this great apostle of prayer made it a rule for the Redemptorist Fathers to pray aloud with the whole congregation in the church and in processions. They say with the people the Rosary and other prayers. The devotion of the holy Rosary was revealed by the Blessed Virgin to St. Dominic as the great means to convert sinners and preserve the faith. “Remember,” said she to this great saint, “remember that the redemption of the world was begun by the salutation of the angel; it was completed by the bitter Passion and death of my divine Son, and it was established and secured by his

glorious resurrection. The remedy, therefore, of so many evils shall be meditation on the mysteries of the life, death and glory of my Son, uniting thereto the angelic salutation by which the great mystery of redemption was announced to the world."

Wherever St. Dominic introduced the devotion of the Rosary, a true amendment of life could be noticed in the people; so much so that, if any one was seen to live on in sin the people pointed at him with their fingers, saying: "Behold one who does not say the Rosary!" Casimir II, king of Poland, requested the Father-General of the Dominican Fathers to send him such missionaries as were able to preach well the devotion of the Rosary; for, said he, "they are the best reformers of the manners of the people." It is by this devotion and other prayers that the Redemptorist Fathers draw the blessing of God upon their sermons and instructions and other labors of the mission and obtain for the people the grace of a thorough conversion and amendment of life. Prayer recited in common is very powerful with God. The Lord is with those who pray together. This way of praying is kept up by the people after the mission. We could relate many instances to show that, where family-prayers were unknown in parishes before the mission, were found in use many years after the mission had been given. In many parishes the priests did not attempt to have prayers said aloud by the people in the church, or if they attempted to introduce this pious practice, it was only the voices of children that were heard; but after the mission the people most willingly prayed aloud with the priest. In many parishes, after the mission, it has become a custom to say the beads in public as well as in private.

The prayers then of the missionaries united to those of the people are another reason of the success of their missions.

Again, St. Alphonsus wished that his missionary Fathers should, in their missions, adopt certain ceremonies which are calculated to make a deep impression upon the people. The principal of these ceremonies are : The act of atonement made to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament in reparation for sin ; the act of consecration to the Blessed Virgin after the sermon on the mercy and power of intercession of Mary ; the procession and the erection of the mission-cross ; the solemn exercise of the Way of the Cross ; the blessing of the children ; the renewal of the baptismal vows ; the public reception of the scapular ; the solemn blessing of the beads and other articles of devotion, and the Papal Benediction after the closing sermon. These ceremonies are made as solemn as possible, especially the act of atonement, the consecration to the Blessed Virgin and the Papal Benediction. Whilst these three acts are being performed, the Church is magnificently illuminated and the altars are beautifully decorated. The wax-candles used on these occasions are furnished at the expense of the congregation. " But why all these ceremonies ? " you ask. The answer to your question is found in the chapter : " The use of ceremonies."

Public prayer, the singing of hymns and the solemn religious acts give life to the missions of the Redemptorist Fathers ; they answer the wants of the people and induce them to take a lively interest in the exercises of the mission. On these occasions the people throng the church, and when leaving it, they are filled with compunction and pious sentiments ; they are eager to return to it and hear

the missionaries again. It has often happened that persons who were not converted by the sermons of the missionaries, were converted by witnessing one or the other of the ceremonies of the mission. The success of many a mission is owing to the one or the other of those solemn religious acts.

We know zealous prelates to whom those ceremonies appeared rather vulgar and ridiculous, tending only, as they said, to excite the imagination. But after having witnessed their happy results, they recommended them especially in those parishes which were difficult to reform.

Finally, St. Alphonsus made it a rule that his missionary Fathers alone, if possible, should hear the confessions of the people. "Since it is the sacrament of penance by which men return to the state of grace," says he, "it is clear that on missions the primary and principal duty of the missionaries is to hear confessions. The greatest ruin of souls generally arises from the bad and sacrilegious confessions that have been made either through shame or the inexperience of confessors. It is therefore the duty of the missionaries to hear the confessions of all the people themselves, to the exclusion, as far as possible, of the priests of the place. This rule is of the highest importance, and the Superiors shall very scrupulously observe it.

"If the people do not make their confession to the missionaries, the mission will be useless; for whoever has once through shame or for some other reason made a sacrilegious confession to the confessors of the place, will not hesitate to commit a sacrilege again during the time of the mission. As the missionaries are strangers to the people of the place, those who have made sac-

rileigious confessions will easily open their hearts to the Fathers to be reconciled again to Almighty God. The Fathers, therefore, shall have nothing more at heart than the hearing of confessions, as there is no occupation more efficacious for promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The greater the zeal is with which any one devotes himself to this work, the more will he prove himself a zealous missionary and a faithful imitator of Jesus Christ. Since all should be filled with the same enthusiasm for the glory of God, one should vie with the other in gaining as many souls as possible for Jesus Christ. He who would withdraw from this work either because it is too troublesome or is attended with scruples and anxieties, would set a very bad example and give scandal which may God forever avert from our congregation! Every one, as a true son of this Institute, should therefore be stimulated, as it were, by a hunger and thirst for souls, and be animated with such a desire to assist them by so efficacious a remedy that he shall seem to make no account of any kind of labor, of inconvenience and hardship. The superiors shall not fail to punish those who are careless and insubordinate in this respect."

This rule binds the Redemptorist Fathers to hear the confessions of the people thoroughly, to the satisfaction both of the people and their pastor, who, after the mission, cannot help admiring the wonderful change brought about in his parishioners by the blessing of the mission.

St. Alphonsus, then, is right in saying :

"When disorders of any moment are known to prevail in a town, and the parish priest is unable to apply a remedy, his duty is to do all in his power to procure a

mission. The priest who refuses to have a mission given in his church, must not be surprised if suspicions are entertained as to his own character." About a year ago the members of a congregation in a western diocese of this country requested their priest to have a mission given to them. The priest refused their request, and soon after died suddenly.

A mission or a retreat on a large scale should be given at least every five years, especially in a floating congregation. How many, alas ! never go to confession except on those extraordinary occasions.

To engage one or two missionary priests to preach the Forty Hours' Devotion, or Triduum once or twice a year, or the Lenten Sermons, or to hear the confessions of the parishioners during the Paschal time is undoubtedly no adequate means to draw the heavenly blessings of a regular mission upon the parishioners ; it is a means rather to accustom the people to hear a stranger ; it is also a means for the priest to become habituated to having little or nothing to do, and to avoid the necessity of having an assistant priest.

Let the missionary priests whom you invite be men of God. None of them should be, as it were, a mountebank trying by extravagant language and grotesque action to make himself talked about. Let no man with a turn for the romantic, no man who likes to keep female hearts all in a flutter when he speaks, ever mount your pulpit. St. Alphonsus says :

"If all preachers and all confessors discharged their duty properly, all would be saints. The ruin of the world springs from bad preachers and bad confessors ; and by bad I mean those who do not do their duty as it should be done."

The Renewal of the mission.—The missions do not render men impeccable ; they share that defect in common with the sacrament of penance, in common with the preaching of the Apostles and of our Lord himself. The fruits of the mission do not last forever in every one. Many are apt to fall away gradually. However, to prevent as much as possible, such relapses, St. Alphonsus established a practice quite peculiar to the Redemptorist Fathers—the renewal of the mission to take place a few months after each mission. These renewals usually complete the extirpation of abuses and often bring about the conversion of those who rejected the grace of the mission.

Mgr. Van Bummel, Bishop of Liege, Belgium, used to say that he could easily tell those parishes which had received the blessings of a mission from those that had never enjoyed these blessings. He praised the ceremony of the erection of the cross as an efficacious means to engrave vividly the remembrance of the mission upon the hearts of the parishioners.

Most assuredly, after the lapse of some years, it becomes necessary for various reasons to repeat the exercises of the mission, especially in this country, where there are so many floating congregations. For this reason many prelates have made it a rule for their priest to have the exercises of a mission repeated every five or seven years.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MEANS TO PRESERVE RELIGIOUS FERVOR IN A CONGREGATION.

The First Means—The Frequentation of the Sacraments.

The pastor is strictly bound frequently to encourage his parishioners to go often to confession and Communion. "Let not the faithful imagine," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, "that it is enough for them to receive the Body of our Lord only once a year. They should go oftener to holy Communion. But whether they should go to Communion every month, or every week or every day, cannot be decided by any fixed universal rule. St. Augustine, however, lays down a most certain rule, applicable to all, namely: "Live," he says, "in such a manner as to be able to receive holy Communion every day." It is, therefore, the duty of the pastor frequently to admonish the faithful to nourish their souls daily with this heavenly food. The pastor, then, is obliged, according to the Catechism of the Council of Trent, to encourage the people to receive daily. It speaks of monthly Communion as the least frequent. If the pastor, then, is bound to encourage the people to receive Communion every day, it is certainly not to say too much that he is strictly obliged to exhort the people to receive holy Communion at least once a month and give them the opportunity of going to confession every month.

"Pastor," says St. Alphonsus, "non solum debet

prospicere, ut oves ejus præcepta adimpleant, sed etiam ut iis auxiliis præmuniantur quæ eorum profectui conferre possunt." (De Paroch. Oligatio. n. 12.)

In my work "The Blessed Eucharist, Our Greatest Treasure," I have shown the wonderful effects which frequent Communion produces in the worthy receiver. I will here add what Monsignor De Ségur says in his little treatise on weekly Communion. "I know one," he says, "who, after devoting forty years to the work of sanctifying youths, said to me: "I have a very simple and almost infallible method of knowing at once the moral condition of any establishment for boys—college, boarding-school, seminary, academy, etc. Do the boys communicate frequently? If they do, all is well; if they do not, I have my doubts. This test I have found out, after long experience, and I do not remember that I have ever been deceived by it.'" "In a fine large school in the South," said a holy religious to me, (Mons. De Ségur,) "I have had the happiness of preaching the annual retreat once or twice. It was wonderful to see how everything seemed redolent with the perfume of the Holy Eucharist. The spiritual direction of the youths was based on the largest views and the most consummate prudence. There were hardly two of them who remained proof against its piety and love. The morals of the place were perfect, the discipline excellent, and its learning on a level with its fervor.

"Alas, a new superior came, who thought it right to check this zeal for Communion, under pretext of discipline and regularity. He restricted the privileges of frequent confession, and still more that of frequent Communion. In less than two years the tone of the house had com-

pletely altered, and cheerfulness and good morals had disappeared, together with pious devotion. And this religious house, formerly so edifying, never became again what it had been.

“The venerable superior of an important *petit seminaire*, where the privilege of frequent Communion had existed for some five or six years, said to me, in confidence, at the end of a retreat, ‘I become more and more convinced, not only of the utility, but I must say of the necessity, of frequent Communion in houses of education, particularly bishops’ schools. In a few years’ time this place has been transformed. Hardly any surveillance is necessary, even over the smallest boys: *our Lord in the Eucharist manages all for us in the recesses of their hearts.* We are every day at the children’s disposal; they confess whenever they wish, and to the confessor they prefer. They have full liberty to approach the holy table whenever they like, and there is hardly one who does not receive his divine Saviour every Sunday and feast day. The heads of the classes set the good example. Our best scholars are almost always the most fervent. Everything goes like clock work. It is really a house where God is served.’

“‘And the man,’ he added, ‘who would teach this lesson to the superiors of our seminaries and religious schools, would deserve to be called the Saviour of our young ecclesiastical students, and indeed of our Catholic youth in general.’

“As it is with the life of the individual so it is with the life of the Christian family. Frequent Communion sanctifies the family by sanctifying each member thereof. What is it that generally mars the happiness of a family?

Is it not nearly always ill-temper on the part of the father, the mother, or the children ? At the slightest contradiction they are offended ; they get angry, they wound the feelings of others, they become violent, and are very difficult to appease. There is no yielding.

“ Now in a family, in which nearly all the members are in the pious habit of receiving Communion frequently, or at least once a week, such outbursts of bad temper are, generally, if not always, repressed. And why ? Because conscience is necessarily on the alert, being kept ever watchful by the salutary effects of holy Communion. Every time they receive Communion, father, mother, children and servants renew their good resolutions and draw from this holy sacrament the strength necessary to remain faithful. I do not pretend to say that bad tempers and other natural defects are uprooted by frequent Communion, but they are carefully controlled, and successfully combated by means of this great sacrament. On the contrary, in a family, where the members receive Communion only once or twice a year, all natural defects have full play. Instead of being combated, they are allowed to gain strength during the five or six months that intervene between each Communion. As no care is taken to renew often and regularly a stock of meekness, forbearance, charity, and self-denial, it is impossible for the members of such a family to overcome themselves and to practise those domestic virtues which are the soul of happiness and union.

“ What has been said of the wonderful effects of frequent Communion upon the Christian family applies also to the parish. O what a change for the better would soon take place if all the faithful of a parish were often to receive holy Communion !

“Abuses of every kind would disappear in a short time, simply through the workings of conscience. There would be no more dishonesty, scarcely any quarrels, no real scandals. All might not indeed become perfect, but all would immediately improve, and improve so much that, compared with their former state, they would seem almost perfect. The work of police, magistrates, and of half the judges would be almost superfluous. There would be no more law-suits or disputes ; peace, union and sweet cheerfulness would reign everywhere. There would be no more poor, for the rich would be always ready to provide for their wants. In a word, there would be no evils except those necessarily entailed by human frailty. And how well God would be served ! How pleasant would then be the life of a priest ! The priest’s work will always remain hard, but nevertheless what consolations would he then have ! Even if he were worked to death, what a holy and glorious death it would be ! And then what a consoling sight would the churches present, especially on Sundays and holydays ! What congregations ! How every one’s fervor would be maintained by the example of his fellows ! It would be a heaven on earth.

“I am not writing simply from fancy. There are parishes in the world of this kind. I saw such some time back ; in Tyrol, for instance, in the isle of Malta, and again in certain parts of the Pontifical States. During a tour I made with some friends in Tyrol, in 1846, the pastor of one of those happy places told me that *every day nearly all* his parishioners attended Mass before dawn — the men on one side the women on the other ; that every night they recited the Rosary and family prayers, to-

gether; and that from the time of their First Communion every one, not hindered from doing so, approached the sacraments regularly every Sunday and feast-day. We started on our journey at five o'clock in the morning, and passed before the church; it was crowded; so crowded, indeed, that some thirty people were kneeling on the ground, hearing Mass outside the church. We passed close by them on horseback, and not one turned his head to look at us.

“At a place eleven leagues from Rome, in 1853, I saw something similar. ‘We have not a beggar in the parish,’ said the *gonfaloniere*, or mayor. ‘Monks or nuns take care of our poor. One old constable is enough to keep peace all over town, though it has six thousand inhabitants. Our families are large, industrious and happy. And the good religious who help the parish priests to nourish the piety of these excellent people, added: ‘Here, the majority of our congregations approach the sacraments weekly or fortnightly; no one stays away longer than a month. Herein lay the secret of their peace and happiness.’

“I knew, in Normandy, an admirable priest, still living, to whom was intrusted a newly-formed parish, where everything had to be done. This parish consisted of five hundred souls taken from three neglected adjacent parishes, scarcely twenty of whom had made their Easter. The pastor set to work—was his own mason, carpenter, and collector of funds—and in six years he built a pretty little church with a well arranged sacristy. He also founded an excellent school, taught by Franciscan nuns, where all his little ones learned how to lead good lives and save their souls. Last of all, he built a presbytery, after years

of inconceivable difficulties. All the while he was regularly and carefully giving catechetical instructions ; indefatigable in preaching very short, simple, and practical sermons ; ardently exhorting his flock to worship the providence of God, and to confess and communicate very frequently. He so arranged the hours of Mass that all could conveniently receive the sacraments ; he taught them how to derive most profit from confession and the Holy Eucharist, and made his church an attraction and a pleasure to them. At the end of the first six years this good priest had, every day, from forty to sixty pious attendants at Mass, and ten to fifteen communicants ; and every Sunday fifty or sixty communicants, sometimes a hundred ; every month the greater part of his parishioners, men and women, youths and maidens, came to his side to gain new graces and strengthen their good resolutions. The change was complete. Instead of the old *twenty* Easter Communions of former days, there were now thousands of Communions in the course of the year ; some chosen souls communicated every morning ; and at the time that he was telling me of these miraculous transformations, there remained only sixteen persons in the parish to convert."

Ask any Christian who once lived in sin and afterwards truly amended, when was it that he began to get the better of his passions, and he will tell you it was from the moment that he began to frequent the sacraments. How can it be otherwise ? Jesus calms the winds and seas by a single word. What storm will be able to resist his power ? What gust of passion will not subside when, on entering the soul, he says : " Peace be with thee : be not afraid, it is I ! "

Multitudes of pious souls confess that it is holy Communion alone which keeps them steady in the practice of virtue, and cheerful amid all the vicissitudes of life.

How often do we hear such souls declaring that on the days on which they do not receive Communion they seem to be paralyzed. Everything seems to go wrong with them, and all their crosses seem tenfold heavier than usual. But when, in the morning, they have had the happiness of partaking of the body of Christ, everything seems to go well with them. The daily annoyances of life seem to disappear; they are happy and joyous. Words of kindness seem to come naturally to their lips, and life is no longer the burden which it once seemed to be.

If such are the wonderful effects of the frequent use of the sacraments, what then are we to think of those priests who, instead of encouraging the people often to receive the sacraments, rather dissuade them in public and in private from approaching them.

A mission was given in a certain parish. During the mission the people were urged to go often to confession. After the mission, however, the good pastor was unfortunately removed. His successor was not exactly consumed with zeal for the sanctification of souls. When the good people came to confession, he sent them away, scolded them for coming so often and told them that three times a year was often enough. He even spoke to them of the necessity of obeying their pastor, that "obedience is better than sacrifice," and so on.

Is it not strange that those good priests who are always preaching obedience to their flock, are themselves the most unwilling to obey. It might not be right to say

that they are Jansenists ; but it cannot be wrong to say that they belong to the number of those who do not care to break bread to the little ones. “ The little ones have asked for bread and there was none to break it unto them.” (Isai. iv, 4.) They have not the spirit of the divine Pastor and his Church. Congregations that have such pastors are to be pitied.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SECOND MEANS—CIRCULATION OF GOOD BOOKS.

This is an age of reading. Books of every sort are readily obtained—good books, bad books ; books of piety and books of blasphemy ; books of history, more or less trustworthy ; books that pass under that name, that are filled with every kind of prejudice, and give but an *ex parte* statement. We have books, too, of fiction of every grade, from those which elevate the imagination to the highest moral and spiritual aspiration, to those which sink it to the lowest degree of turpitude—aye, books so coarse and revolting in their tendencies as scarcely to bear being alluded to by a decent pen.

Yet all these find readers ; and if the reports of the newsdealers and the sellers of cheap literature are to be trusted, the sensational, the exciting works—no matter how base a morality inculcated—sell in the proportion of one thousand to one of solid works. They carry away the palm, but what else do they do ?

Books read in the impressionable days of youth have a lasting influence on the mind ? As in days of old it was said : “Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you are,” so now, with equal truth, it may be said : “Tell me what sort of books you read, and I will tell you what you will become.”

And yet how little attention is paid to the casual reading of the young ! The very newspapers teem with the relation of infamous transactions, and these news-

papers, being caught up by the young, by their means the bloom of innocence is worn away, or tarnished by mental association with the horrors of depraved society. There is more evil in this than at first appears. Familiarity with vice in books is not less dangerous than in a companion ; and it is more insidious, because the revolting accompaniments are less prominent. The daring feat, the delineation of *secrét* or forbidden delight, act on the imagination and prompt to imitation. The child-reader revels and takes part mentally in transactions of which he ought not to know the name, and thus the purity of his imagination is sullied, even if no worse evil attend on this course.

The books presented to the young, and even the newspapers, should contain wholesome directions, praiseworthy examples, and only such should reach the childish hand. To give one good book and allow access to another more sensational, or to one of dubious tendency, is to nullify the effect of the first ; for the youthful powers are far more quickly excited by highly wrought up appeals to the imagination than to those resulting from deductions of reason. This is not to say that the imagination of the young is not to be catered for ; so beautiful a faculty could not righteously be left in abeyance ; but there is a right way of fostering it as well as a wrong one.

The Christian idea, which refers all to God, and sees in all human good only a reflex of divine good, can surely present a whole library of volumes full of interest, and capable of exciting the most pleasurable emotions. All that the press needs is encouragement, and there is talent—not to say genius—enough to provide for our youth all they need. But publishers of such works as we de-

scribe complain that their books hang on hand, while those of their neighbors find ample sale, whether for their fiction or scientific hypothesis.

Books need to be *looked over* for the establishment of lending libraries—expurgated before admitted. There is, nowadays, too great a facility in admitting theories which imperceptibly undermine the foundation on which Faith and Truth rest. A child's undeveloped soul must be kept pure and unsullied, in order to enable him to compass the vital spirit that should animate him; it should be kept pure even from crude theories that pass for science, but are in fact the materialistic myths which, under the guise of free inquiry, ignore the divine element from which all true science springs. The trail of the serpent is nowhere more prominent than when it coils around incontestable facts, and gives to those facts another meaning than the one by which they illustrate the divine science of which they are the type.

Now, though books should be selected with great care, yet how little care is bestowed upon the selection of a book that will go to speak of God to the thousands who do not comply with their religious duties! At the yearly distribution of prizes in colleges, academies, and parish schools, thousands of volumes are gratuitously given to the pupils of those schools. What a vast amount of good might be done through that channel, if the books were well chosen! What a mass of profitable and edifying reading might be introduced thereby among families! But, as it is, the works are taken up, as it were, at random. A book receives a bishop's approval. This is deemed amply sufficient to warrant its adoption. It may be barren of ideas, tiresome, nothing more than a bad

religious romance ; it may even be dangerous : no matter, it is given away, notwithstanding all those defects. But what is very strange is the fact that this is done by men who have a religious vocation, who are otherwise most distinguished, and who are intrusted with the education of the children of the upper classes. It would seem, indeed, as if we were bent on verifying the assertion of our adversaries, that the pious possess no other than a contemptible and humdrum literature.

Truth is one ; let it be presented in its unity, in its harmony to the regenerated soul of a child. Let us have libraries fit for their use ; let us circulate magazines filled with truthful adventure, or, if fiction is required, let that fiction be a picture of the effect of Truth on the human mind. Let us have no more representations of terrible crimes presented to the youthful vision ; for, however such may be modified by the pictures of remorse resulting from the commission of crime, the worldliness and luxury that occasion deeds of darkness ever stand out too prominently, are drawn with too realistic a pencil, are delineated in too fascinating a manner not to tempt the young reader to wish that he too might participate in such pleasures, each one flattering himself the while that he could pass the ordeal unscathed.

I repeat, let libraries of healthy literature be multiplied ; let our magazines increase in number, and let some of them adapt themselves especially to the young mind ; this were easily done, if priests and parents would but take the matter in hand, and *consider themselves* responsible for the reading matter furnished to their children.

The learned can find in learned books their mental pabulum, but the vast range of people who—without

being learned—are seeking intelligence and interest beyond mere physical wants, must be cared for. Thousands lay down an article because it is too dry, who would recognize the truth such article contains were it illustrated by a tale. We want tales, not merely to amuse, but to show the relation that the individual bears to society; to make manifest that the building up of the spiritual life of that same society is the only safeguard for the well-being of the individual.

Society is becoming too animalized, too materialized in its spirit and tendencies—*practically* it is assumed that we are derived from animals: the fact that we are children of the Most High God, and that our happiness consists in the indwelling of the Divine Essence in the soul, is virtually ignored. Thousands and thousands do not realize that happiness must have its seat in the soul, that the soul must be united to God. And yet all history might teach this important lesson, were history written of the people instead of the warriors and devastators of the human race. Were the false views of glory exposed to view, were the true representation of what the people suffered that *one man* might be exalted and borne on the shield of victory, made potent, we should realize, as Cowper sings—

“ War is a game that, were their subjects wise,
Kings could not play at.”

In fact, were the true principles which govern society inculcated from childhood upwards, making known the true nobility of man when his soul is divinely developed, we might re-enter securely the golden age of the ancients, or that of the early Christians who were “one in heart and soul.”

The future of society depends on the generation now growing up. Whether it be bad and retrogressive into barbarism, or whether it be good and progressive—ever upwards and onwards, till it meets the supreme truth in God—depends very much on the books, magazines and daily papers, which interest the youthful mind. A taste may be formed for healthy mental exercise, as, alas! a taste may be perverted by unhealthy stimulants; and in this latter case the injury done is often unperceived until it is irreparable. When we first enter an ill-ventilated building, the atmosphere of which has been rendered fetid by the crowds who have consumed the oxygen and unfitted it for being breathed, we are perhaps conscious of an unpleasant odor, but after sitting awhile we become less and less conscious of it, though the poisonous exhalations enter our being at every breath we draw, and prepare it for the reception of disease. It is so also with the unwholesome *atmosphere* of worldly, sentimental and sensational books—to say nothing of those detailing criminal transactions; the atmosphere wraps us round, we inhale its poison; it goes to form our very frame, to become a part of ourselves; we know not how we got it, but it is there, call it afterwards by what name we will—*notion, idea, liberality or liberty*; we have imbibed somewhat of the world's poison, and it will taint our every act.

The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light—they withhold from their offspring all that they deem superstitious. They ridicule and abuse all that fosters the union of the soul with God. Many grow up, like John Stuart Mill, in total ignorance that their soul is the organ by which to approach God,

and that only by that approach can its powers be developed. Let us, as priests, be as careful for soul-development as these are for self-reliant, intellectual culture. And to do this, we must watch over the "reading" of our young people and provide for them such as will give them true ideas of right and wrong, whether by story of travels, adventure of the past records of mankind, or of delineation of animal nature.

In times gone by, the Masters of Science were priests and Catholic laymen. To be so again it is necessary that Christian parents recognize their duty of upholding exclusively for their children Christian literature—a literature of wider range perhaps than they dream of, since all that is highest, best, in poetry, fiction, or real history, is essentially Christian, and therefore Catholic; it is also necessary, very necessary indeed, that pastors repeatedly explain this duty of parents and emphatically urge parents to comply with this all-important duty.

To accomplish the object we speak of we recommend here a work of modern institution which has already produced considerable fruits of salvation in Europe; it is an association of ladies which was formed in 1849 under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. It has taken the title of "Our Lady of Good Books. Its object is to prevent as much as possible the distribution of bad books and to circulate good ones by the establishment of Catholic libraries.

This work has already widely spread; it is approved and recommended by very many Bishops; and the Sovereign Pontiff himself has kindly given the association a solemn proof of his high esteem by granting to all who recite every day the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary"

and the "Creed," for the extension of the work, a plenary indulgence every month ; and to those who recite the same prayers for the same end, an indulgence for three hundred days to be obtained once every day.

Another way of promoting the diffusion of good books is to give men a personal interest in the undertaking. Authors and publishers should be amply commended and remunerated for their co-operation ; and the trade—if you choose to call it so—made subservient to the good work. Let those, also, who sell such books, make reasonable profits by the sale. Generally speaking, great good is not best attained by acting alone, but by securing and availing ourselves of the assistance of others.

But it will be urged : " Such associations cannot be formed without self-sacrifice and money ; besides, they will encounter opposition." Undoubtedly they will ; and so much the better. Opposition and calumny are the rod which God uses to drive us onward. If there is opposition, then there will be courage also ; and many other noble qualities will be elicited. Are we vulgarly to follow the masses ?

Oh ! says another one, we must not be singular ; we must do as others do. Indeed, that is exactly the way sheep and goats act. Goats go one after the other. If the first tumbles over a precipice, the second does the same, and the third, and the fourth and so on till all are killed. You see, they also do as others do.

But I ask, ought reasonable men to act in such a stupid manner ? and yet how many are there, and even priests, who act just like sheep and cast themselves into the abyss of hell simply because others do so ! You say " we must do as others do." But our Lord Jesus Christ says : " Enter

at the narrow gate ; for wide is the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction and many there are who go in thereat." " Ah ! how narrow is the gate and how straight the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it." (Matt. vii, 13, 14.)

Look at the wicked, look at the secret societies. Ah ! what a lesson they teach us ! What a burning shame for us ! They kidnap our children ; they have established public schools for the abolition of every supernatural idea ; they tax us unjustly for the support of their godless institutions—the state schools ; they circulate pamphlets subversive of faith and morals by the millions. Our enemies are ever active and bold, and we are cowardly asleep ; they sacrifice their time, money and rest, even their life to ruin souls, to carry out the devil's plans, and we, what sacrifices do we make ? O priest of the Most High, and pastor of souls, can you honestly say that it is not in your power to circulate good books, or at least to recommend them repeatedly and most earnestly ?

One day a mission was given in a country district. The parish priest told the missionary that his people did not read. In proportion as the exercises of the mission progressed, heaps of books were forthcoming of so abominable description that the like were not be found even in large cities—books the very titles of which were an outrage on public morality. There are books which have wrought many conversions ; which in the course of a few years have reclaimed more sinners than the most celebrated priests have converted during their lives. Such a book, for instance, is the " Prodigal Son," which I published some years ago. Seven members

of one family embraced the faith after having read this book.

Many a good and zealous priest has told us that, by distributing good books among his parishioners, he has done more good to them than by his sermons and all the other sources of the ministry combined.

CHAPTER XX.

THE THIRD MEANS—THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PIOUS ASSOCIATIONS.

“Some persons,” says St. Alphonsus, “disapprove of pious associations, saying that they give rise to contention, and that many join them from human motives. The sacraments are also abused by many, yet for that we do not condemn them. The Sovereign Pontiffs, instead of condemning confraternities, have approved and highly commended them and enriched them with indulgences. What did not St. Charles Borromeo do to establish and multiply these sodalities? In his synods he distinctly intimates to confessors that they should endeavor to induce their penitents to join them. And with reason; for these confraternities, especially those of Our Lady, are like so many arks of Noe, in which the poor people of the world may find refuge from the deluge of temptations and sins which inundate them in it.” (Act. Med. to. I. C. 6, 58.)

“Enter,” says St. Francis de Sales, “enter willingly into the confraternities of the place in which you reside, and especially those whose exercises are the most productive of fruit and edification, as in so doing you practise a sort of obedience acceptable to God; for, although these confraternities are not commanded, they are, nevertheless, recommended, by the Church, which, to testify her approbation of them, grants indulgences and other privileges to such as enter them. Besides, it is very

laudable to concur and co-operate with many in their good designs ; for although we might perform as good exercises alone as in the company of a confraternity, and perhaps take more pleasure in performing them in private, yet God is more glorified by the union and contribution we make of our good works with those of our brethren and neighbors."

"Pious confraternities, especially those of our Lady," says St. Alphonsus, "are so many arks of Noe, in which the poor people of the world may find refuge from the deluge of temptations and sins which inundate them in it. We well learn in the course of our missions the utility of these confraternities. Speaking exactly, there are found more sins in a man who does not belong to any confraternity than in twenty who are regular and practical members of pious associations. The confraternity may be said to be the tower of David : 'The tower of David, a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men.' (Cant. iv, 4.) And this is the cause of the good obtained from the confraternities, namely, that their members acquire in them many defences against hell ; and they make use in them of many means to preserve themselves in the grace of God,—means which persons who are no members of confraternities, find it very difficult to practise. When the Duke of Popoli was on his death-bed, he said to his son : 'My son, know that the little good I have done in life I owe to the confraternity ; and therefore I have no greater good to leave to thee than the Sodality of Mary. I am more proud of having been a member of the confraternity than the Duke of Popoli.' " (Glories of Mary.)

No doubt, in our age the greatest evils are effected

by the associations of wicked and infidel men and women. The establishments of pious associations, therefore, should be encouraged more than ever, in order to counteract, as much as possible, the wicked deeds of satanic societies.

In these pious societies, the good pastor finds, indeed, a mighty defence against unbelief and certain scandals of the age. He may often and very fervently preach against certain evils of our times without the least success. Let him establish practical and popular associations, enrol the young people in them and soon he will notice a great change in moral behavior of the entire parish.

One day a very zealous and prudent priest was sent by his bishop to take charge of a large parish which had been without a pastor for eighteen years. Most scandalous dancing took place there every Sunday. Without preaching against this great scandal, the good pastor soon succeeded in doing away with it. He established a sodality of Mary and enrolled in it all the young women of the parish.

The Fourth Means—*To stand guard at the Fountain-head of the Parish—the Family.*

The family is an institution which is the work of God himself. This institution is not only the very foundation of society, but it is society itself, the corner-stone of all governments, the very basis of all progress and civilization. This institution, if preserved in its primitive purity, upholds the State, preserves the Church on earth and fills heaven with saints; but if corrupted, this institution will be an abundant source of all kinds of miseries for society and State, for the Church and her institutions. In a word, on this institution depends the weal or woe of the world.

The waters of a stream always partake of the nature of the fountain-head. If the latter is pure, the former will also be pure; if the source is poisoned, its waters will also be poisoned.

Take a parish where the majority of the families are perverted in their intellect, corrupt in their hearts, and diseased in their very blood. Give to that parish the most reasonable laws, govern it as perfectly as possible, adorn it with the refinements of art and civilization, and yet withal you will have but a demoralized parish, slavish, selfish, cowardly, a painted harlot.

Take, on the contrary, a parish where most of the families possess the whole truth without any admixture of error; whose hearts are pure, and whose blood is untainted, and you will find a parish of sages and saints, a parish great, morally, physically and intellectually.

The stream that flows from so pure a source, rolls on majestically, bringing everywhere blessing and prosperity. And even should its waters in their onward course become defiled at times, they are soon renewed and purified by the limpid waters that flow continually from the pure fountain-head.

Now, it is the duty of every pastor to stand guard at this fountain-head of the parish, in order to protect it as much as possible against every kind of defilement. In order to comply with this most important duty of his pastoral office he must explain well the duties of married men and women as well as those of the young men and young women of his parish. To the married man he must show his dignity *as man* and his dignity and authority *as husband, as father, and as master and head of the family*.

To the married woman he must show her dignity *as wife, as house-keeper and as mother*. He must explain to parents the dignity of Christian children, in order to inspire them with supernatural love for their offspring and encourage them to give their children a true Christian education. He must explain to them what a good education is and how it is to be given. He must also call attention to the faults which are usually committed by parents in the education of their children. (I have explained all these duties of parents in my work "*Dignity, Authority and Duties of Parents*.")

If parents are well instructed in their duties and are plainly shown that their hope of salvation consists in complying faithfully with their duties, then most, if not all of them, will do all in their power to be faithful to the duties of their state of life, and the pastor will have little trouble to govern his parish.

As to young men and young women, the pastor must show to them how important it is to make no mistake in the choice of a state of life. And as most of them are called to the married state, the great sacrament of Matrimony as well as the impediments thereto should be well explained to them.

Moreover, young men should know the qualities required in young women to make good wives, mothers and house-keepers and what kind of young women will never make good wives, mothers and house-keepers.

On the other hand, young women, too, should know the qualities required in young men to make good husbands, fathers, and heads of families. Both young men and young women should know the lawful motives of marriage.

They should be shown how important it is in their choice to care more for religion and virtue than for temporal advantages, to ask God to guide them in the choice of their state of life, to consult their confessor and parents and to consider well whether they are able to fulfil the weighty duties of the married state.

The pastor must also explain how important it is for those who intend to get married, to prepare themselves well for this great sacrament by leading pure lives, by making a good confession and receiving Holy Communion, and by having, if possible, the nuptial Mass and blessing.

Finally, the pastor must explain to them, as far as necessary, the duties of married people.

(On all these points you will find plain, practical instructions in my work: "Dignity, Authority and Duties of Parents.")

Although it is the duty of a pastor to instruct young people of both sexes in the points just mentioned, yet he must scrupulously abstain from negotiating marriages. The part of a match-maker is altogether unbecoming his sacred character. Cornelius a Lapide quotes several great saints and doctors of the Church who declined all participation in so delicate an affair, even writing a letter or saying a word to counsel this or that union; for "how can I know," said they, "whether this or that person is called by God to the married state, and how can I know whether this young lady is called by God to get married to that young man?" Not to compromise himself, the pastor should let every man look out for a wife himself, and let the parents of the parties trouble themselves for all necessary information. No doubt, if

the pastor instructs the young people of both sexes in due time about all these important points, they will be very thankful to him and be very careful when there is question about getting married not to make a hasty promise of marriage, and he will have the consolation not to witness many unhappy married people in his parish. Nowadays we see so much misery and unhappiness in the greater part of married people. But who is but too often to blame for so many unhappy marriages? Is it not the pastor who never or but very seldom speaks against improper company-keeping; who hardly ever inveighs against parents who allow such sinful company-keeping; who never makes young people about to be married go to confession and be married according to the spirit of the Church?

'The Fifth Means—*Do all in your power to prevent mixed marriages.*

One day a mother went with her daughter to see a physician. "Doctor," said she, "my daughter seems to be going blind, and she's just going to be married—and a mixed marriage, too! Oh, dear me, what is to be done?" "Let her go right on with the wedding, madam, by all means," said the doctor. "If anything can open her eyes, mixed marriage will."

Indeed, all those who are about to contract a mixed marriage, must be blind. The blindness of such Catholics is generally owing to the blindness of their parents, who so easily permit such marriages; and this blindness of parents is often owing to a want of sufficient knowledge of the evil results of such marriages, and of the strict laws of God and the Church, concerning such marriages. It is the duty of every pastor to cure such

blindness of parents and of young people of both sexes ; it is his duty even to prevent it by giving them often plain, practical instructions on this all-important subject. In a synodal address published by the hierarchy of Australia, the Right Rev. prelates speak on the subject of such unions as follows : "The frequency of mixed marriages is a terrible blot upon the character of our Catholic community. It is sad to think with what facility Catholic parents consent to such irreligious connections, and with how little caution they expose their young people to social intercourse, where passionate fancy and the thoughtlessness of youth are certain to entail the danger of mischievous alliances. It is in the main the fault of the parents more than of the children, who hear so little warning against mixed marriages, so little denunciation and deprecation of their dangers and miseries. If young people did hear from the clergy and from parents, as often and as explicitly as they ought, the sense and doctrine of the Church concerning such marriages, these unholy unions would be a far rarer calamity than they are. The generality of the young would revolt from such unions, if they saw them in their true light, as a danger and as a disgrace."

Indeed, experience shows that those pastors who are zealous in teaching the faithful the dangers of these marriages, and are firm in warning all persons to be prudent in the control of their passions, have but seldom to apply for a dispensation, and, when they apply for one, it is based upon the strongest reasons.

This deficiency of instruction arises, in part, from a certain fear of wounding those who have already contracted mixed marriages. No doubt it is a subject that

demands the use of prudent, grave, and measured language. However, where the salvation of souls is at stake, the Church knows neither silence nor false delicacy.

There is a license for the poet, a license for the stage, a license for the bar, a license for the writer of fiction, a license for the press; and why should there not be a license for a Christian writer and speaker, for a true minister of Christ? It is high time for true modesty and delicacy to take the place of false modesty and delicacy, to which the alarming increase of mixed marriages is greatly to be attributed.

Our youth must be taught, in catechism, the law of the Church forbidding mixed marriages. If they are taught properly, they will be prepared to hear it enlarged upon from the pulpit. If the prohibition of mixed marriages, and the reasons of such a prohibition, are made known to them before their passionate fancy is developed, they will have the Catholic sense and instinct within them to guard and withhold them before they allow themselves to be entangled in engagements. If parents are taught to reflect on the dangers inherent to these marriages, on the real religious disadvantages which attend even the best of them; if they are taught the great horror in which the Church holds these marriages, they will be more careful in keeping their children from the immediate occasion of them, and will be less disposed to encourage them.

Those pastors who easily allow and tolerate mixed marriages, who hardly ever speak against them in their sermons or in the confessional, will, within a few years, have more infidels and apostates in their parishes, than good, fervent Catholics.

There is a congregation in one of the Middle States which numbers about two hundred families. There are no fewer than fifty-seven mixed marriages in it. The number of converts is but six, and the number of those who gave up the Catholic religion is twenty-two. As to the children, there are at present found fifty-four who are being instructed in the rudiments of our religion, and it is hoped that they will adhere to the practice of her doctrines. But there are one hundred and thirty-seven who are receiving their religious training in some religious sect, or are left to grow up in utter ignorance. There are thirty-one more, whose ultimate end is as yet doubtful. The number of perverted Catholics is nearly four to one in this congregation. There is no reason to believe that mixed marriages are less productive of evil in other congregations.

A certain Catholic said one day to one of my brother priests: "Four of my brothers married Protestants. Their children to-day would scorn the thought that their grandparents were Irish Catholics."

On the day of general judgment a terrible sentence of condemnation will be pronounced upon all those pastors who so easily allow the hellish wolves to devour the sheep and lambs of the fold of Christ!

(See what I have said on this subject in my work "Grace and the Sacraments".)

Sixth Means—*Prevent unlawful pleasures, especially improper dancing.*

In the Pastoral Letter addressed to their flocks by the Irish Bishops assembled in National Synod at Maynooth, 1875, their Lordships, after warning the faithful against dangerous amusements in theatres and elsewhere,

thus speak of improper dances: "To these we must add the improper dances which have been imported into our country from abroad, to the incalculable detriment of morality and decency. Such dances have always been condemned by the pastors of the Church. This condemnation we here renew; and we call upon all to whom God has intrusted the care of immortal souls, to use every exertion to banish from among us what is clearly of itself an occasion of sin. St. Francis of Sales, that most indulgent of spiritual guides, addressing the people of the world, has left it written ('Devout Life,' chap. xxiii), that innumerable souls are suffering eternal punishment for sins they had committed in dancing, or which were occasioned by dancing. We cannot but admire those heads of families who, in obedience to the teaching of their Pastors, resisting the torrent of evil custom, have closed their doors against these forbidden amusements, lest they should stain their conscience by exposing themselves or others to the danger of spiritual ruin. God is a faithful rewarder; and such parents may rest assured that, as in the government of their household they have imitated the holy Tobias, who taught his child, *from his infancy to fear God and abstain from every sin*, (Tobias i, 10.) so, like him, they shall one day find joy and comfort in the domestic happiness of the children they have brought up so well, and through them be filled, even in this life, with all good." (Acts of the Synod of Maynooth, pp. 165, 166.)

In the decrees of the same Synod, the Bishops employ the following very strong language on the subject of *round dances*: "*Omnibus sacerdotibus tam secularibus quam regularibus qui in ministerio animarum versantur, INJUNGIMUS UT*

OMNI QUO POLLENT ZELO, *saltationes quasdam* (round dances) *recenter in hanc regionem inductas, et modestie christiane plane repugnantes* PRO VIRIBUS IMPEDIANT. *Et sciant confessarii se suo muneri non satisfacere si ullo modo aut sub ullo prætectu eas permittant aut excusent.*" (Decretum xxi, n. 216.)

The good pastor is fully convinced of the baleful effects of improper dancing, and therefore it is not necessary to show him the necessity of opposing and condemning such a sinful pleasure. It will, however, be necessary for him to know how to refute the objections of such dances, especially the objections of a certain class of priests who are not "*ex genere illorum virorum per quos salus facta est in Israel.*"

(See what I have said on this subject in my work "Explanation of the Commandments Continued.")

CHAPTER XXI.

DIVINE WORSHIP.

Pope Innocent III gave the following command concerning the place, the vases, corporals and vestments of divine worship : “Præcipimus quoque ut oratoria, vasa corporalia et vestimenta nitida conserventur : nimis enim videtur absurdum in sacris negligere quæ dedecent in profanis.” (In can. 1. Relinqui, tit. 44.)

“Cleanliness,” says the proverb, “is next to godliness.” The Church, whether rich or poor, should be always scrupulously clean. It is a burning shame to see the house of God dingy and dusty.

A good priest was once transferred to a certain parish. He found everything in a sad state. Everywhere confusion reigned. He called the attention of his people to the condition of the church ; but they did not seem either to heed or to understand him. At last he put on an apron, took a broom himself and began to sweep the church. As soon as the men heard of this, they sent their wives to relieve the good priest, and from that day the church was kept scrupulously clean. The people too remarked : “Now indeed it is a pleasure to go to church.”

Altar-bread.—Let the hosts be thick enough ; if too thin, they melt away on the tongue of the receiver before he is able to swallow at least part of it. Communion requires manducatio carnis Christi, which does not take place unless part of the sacred host has been swallowed.

The vestments, the altar-linen, the communion-rail and communion-cloth, and especially the purificator, the palla, the corporal, the chalice, the ciborium, the monstrance, the pyx, the oil-stocks, the cruets—in a word, everything connected with the altar, should be always scrupulously neat and clean.

A good priest was once requested to take charge of a certain parish during the absence of the pastor. He found that everything had been sadly neglected. The pewter cruets were incrustated with disgusting mould. The artificial flowers on the altar were covered with dust. They had ceased to blush. They were far advanced in the yellow leaf. The candlesticks were adorned with verdigris and candlegrease. The statues resembled poor soldiers returned from battle. One saint had lost his fingers, another a hand, etc. The confessional was full of dust and cobwebs. The carpet in the sanctuary was worn and torn and dusty. The baptismal salt was melting with grief in a broken saucer. The baptismal font and the oil-stocks were green with verdigris. The altar-linen was covered with grease spots. The palla and corporal were yellow and mildewed. The vestments were old and torn. The cincture fell to pieces in his hands as he tried to fasten it around him. The missal was torn, antiquated—the strings had long ago disappeared. The hosts were mouldy; how old they were he could not tell. The chalice, the ciborium, the pyx, the monstrance were dingy and dirty.

Would any priest suffer such vessels to be placed on his table? Would he walk in the streets with clothes thus old and filthy and torn? And yet such things are good enough for our dear Lord! good enough for the God of all glory!

Altar-lamp.—Some say : “It is too expensive to keep the lamp burning day and night.”

See all the lights that are burning in the streets, in the theatre, in the ball-room, in the saloons and even in worse places still. No one objects to all these lights ; but to keep a little lamp burning before our Lord, the King of Heaven and earth, is too expensive ! Ah, how little faith in the Real Presence and how little love for Jesus Christ must be in the heart of him who can make such an objection !

The Choir.—In the choir silence should be observed ; all unnecessary talking should be forbidden. No immoral person should be permitted to sing there. It is better to have no music than suffer flirting and improper liberties in the holy house of God.

The priest should encourage the people to sing. He can begin with the children. Where the people do not sing in church, they sometimes sing at home songs that are not very devout.

Sexton.—The sexton should be devout, respectful, pure and sober. An immoral sexton can ruin the poor servers, and sometimes makes too free with the members of the altar society, etc.

Altar-boys.—The priest should select only the best boys as Mass-servers. Servers so often turn out bad and become infidels. The priest should teach them to pronounce the words distinctly, not to speak in church, to behave with great reverence in presence of our Lord.

It is not prudent to require the poor boy to serve more than one Mass. How few priest are willing to serve or even to hear two Masses ! How many priests become tired and cannot wait till even one Mass is over !

It is well to have a good number of boys who know how to serve and to give each one his turn.

The servers, even if poor, should be always neatly and cleanly dressed. Each one should have a pair of shoes or slippers in the boys' vestry, as well as a clean surplice and cassock.

To see a server at the altar with dirty shoes and torn garments is hardly conducive to devotion, especially among the fun-loving urchins who kneel outside the sanctuary.

It is imprudent to permit the boys to take up or even to count the collection, or to leave the money where they can easily pocket it. Boys learn thus to steal, make bad confessions and at last become reprobates.

Anthony of Sienna relates the following in his chronicle of the Dominican Order :

“There was once a good priest who served a church in Lusitania ; and he had two pupils, little boys, who came to him daily to learn their letters, and to be instructed in the Latin tongue.

“Now these children were wont to come early from home, and to assist at Mass, before ever they ate their breakfast or said their lessons. And thus was each day sanctified to them, and each day saw them grow in grace and in favor with God and man.

“These little ones were taught to serve at the Holy Sacrifice, and they performed their parts with care and reverence. They knelt and responded, they raised the priest's chasuble and kissed its hem, they rang the bell at the sanctus and the elevation ; and all they did they did right well.

“And when Mass was over they extinguished the altar

lights ; and then, taking their little loaf and can of milk, retired to a side chapel for their breakfast.

“ One day the elder lad said to his master—

“ ‘ Good father, who is the strange child who visits us every morning when we break our fast ? ’

“ ‘ I know not,’ answered the priest. And when the children asked the same question day by day, the old man wondered, and said, ‘ Of what sort is he ? ’

“ ‘ He is dressed in a white robe without seam, and it reacheth from his neck to his feet ? ’

“ ‘ Whence cometh he ? ’

“ ‘ He steppeth down to us suddenly, as it were, from the altar. And we asked him to share our food with us : and that he doth right willingly every morning.’

“ Then the priest wondered yet more, and he asked, ‘ Are there marks by which I should know him, were I to see him ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, father ; he hath wounds in his hands and feet ; and as we give him of our food the blood flows forth and moistens the bread in his hands, till it blushes like a rose.’

“ And when the master heard this, a great awe fell upon him, and he was silent awhile. But at last he said gravely, ‘ O my sons, know that the Holy Child, Jesus, hath been with you. Now when he cometh again, say to him, Thou, O Lord, hast breakfasted with us full often ; grant that we brothers and our dear master may sup with Thee.’

“ And the children did as the priest bade them. The Child Jesus smiled sweetly, as they made the request, and replied, ‘ Be it so ; on Thursday next, the Day of My Ascension, ye shall sup with Me.’

“So when Ascension Day arrived, the little ones came very early as usual, but they brought not their loaf nor the tin of milk. And they assisted at Mass as usual; they vested the priest, they lighted the tapers, they chanted the responds, they rang the bell. But when the *Pax Vobiscum* had been said, they remained on their knees kneeling behind the priest. And so they gently fell asleep in Christ, and they, with their dear master, sat down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

Locking the Church.—The custom to keep the church locked all day is, to say the least, uncatholic. Our Lord is there on a throne of grace. He invites all: “Venite ad me omnes.” “Sinite parvulos venire ad me,” he says to his priests, “et nolite prohibere eos.” How can the people visit our Lord if the church is locked?

Some lock the church, as they say, to keep out thieves. Establish a society of perpetual adoration. Teach the people to visit our Lord during the day, in the evening after their work, etc.

The Curé of Ars at first stayed nearly all day in church praying for his people. In a short time the church was crowded.

The Graveyard.—The graveyard should be kept clean and quiet; it should be a place of silent prayer and meditation. It hardly looks becoming to see it overrun with weeds, or turned into a kitchen-garden or an orchard. Where the people neglect the graveyard it is not likely that they say many prayers for the dead. The Orientals say when they wish evil to any one: “May the dogs defile thy grave!” And look at some of the graveyards of so-called Christians! Even the very precincts, the very walls of the church are sometimes desecrated!

Those priests act prudently who advise the people, instead of erecting costly monuments in the graveyard, to put a window in the Church, or an altar, a valuable painting or statue, or a beautiful altar lamp. The people will thereby be reminded of the dead and of their duty of praying for them. It is at the same time an honor to the living.

You know the saying: "Judge of the faith of the priest by a look at the interior of the church, the sacristy, vestments, and the manner in which he says Mass, and administers the sacraments."

CHAPTER XXII.

SACRED MUSIC.

In all ages men have been convinced that music was a thing divine and belonging to the worship of God. Strabo says that music is the work of God (descended from heaven). "Music," says another author, "is a lost strain from a far distant world; it is the earthly echo of angelic song; a bright remnant of man's lost greatness, a fitful remembrance of sinless childhood, a sigh wafted by the odor-laden breeze of Paradis  ."

The immortal spirit imprisoned within its hut of clay finds language cold and weak. It can speak only through the tearful eye, the quivering lip. Then heavenly music comes to aid the struggling soul and utters her hopes and fears, her joys and her sorrows in a language that is not of earth."

The early Fathers agree in saying that nothing is better adapted to the human soul than music.

"The science of music," says St. Augustine, "is probably the science of moving well the mind. To sing and to chant psalms is the business of the lover of God." "Nothing," says St. John Chrysostom, "so exalts the mind, and gives it as it were wings, so delivers it from the earth, and loosens it from the bonds of the body, so inspires it with the love of wisdom, and fills it with such disdain for the things of this life, as the melody of verses and the sweetness of holy songs."

Music throws the soul into an enthusiastic rapture, so much so, that no art harmonizes so marvellously with the sentiments and idea of infinity, and the relations of God and man. Music rouses a longing desire which charms and even seizes upon the soul with a magical power.

St. Albertus, a monk, while he was a secular in the world, being present at a certain play with its music, respecting the life and conversion of St. Theobald, was suddenly, by divine grace, so filled with compunction, that he began from that hour to lead a life of great sanctity. (Surius, 7 April.)

St. Ansbertus, a monk and Bishop of Rouen, while as yet a layman, and living in the court of the king, hearing some instruments of music, said within himself: "O glorious Creator, what will it be to hear that song of the angels who love Thee, which is to sound forever in the celestial courts! How sweet and admirable will be that chorus of saints, when Thou ordainest that the sounds of a mortal voice, and the skill of human instruments, should be able to excite the minds of the hearers to praise Thee devoutly, their God and their Creator!"

St. Dunstan, while a youth, withdrew from the world to devote himself to music and to the meditation of celestial harmony. (Osbert, *Monachus, Cantuar. in ejus vita*)

Osbert, in his life of St. Dunstan, relates that the holy archbishop had recalled many from the turbulent affairs of the world by means of his musical science.

Brother Pacific, one of the first disciples of St. Francis, had been celebrated, while in the world, for his musical science, and the holy father employed him to instruct the other brethren in singing the hymn of the sun, which

he had composed in honor of God ; for he wished that they should always sing it after their sermons, and that they should tell the people that they were God's musicians, and that they wished no other payment for their music but to behold them doing penance for their sins.

Grievous enmity existed between the Bishop and the Governor of Assisi. St. Francis deputed two of his friars to present themselves before the Governor, and invite him on his part to repair with as many persons as he could collect to the Bishop's house, whither he had deputed two others to apprise the Bishop. When all were assembled, the friars said : " Lords and brethren, beloved in Jesus Christ,—Father Francis being prevented by sickness from coming here in person, has sent us here to sing a canticle which he has composed, and he implores you to listen to it devoutly." Then they began this song, to which St. Francis had added a strophe appropriate to the occasion. The Governor heard them with hands joined and eyes raised to heaven, weeping. When they had finished, he professed his desire to be reconciled with the Bishop, who, on his part, only lamented that he had not been the first to show an example of humility. Then they embraced and kissed each other, mutually demanding forgiveness, and filling the beholders with wonder and joy. (*Les Chroniques des Frères Mineurs.*)

" Music," says Cassiodorus, " dispels sorrow, soothes anger, softens cruelty, excites to activity, sanctifies the quiet of vigils, recalls men from shameful love to chastity, by the sweetest rapture expels the disease of the mind, and soothes, through the medium of the corporal senses, the incorporeal soul." (*Lib. ii, Var. Epist. 40.*)

The celebrated Italian musician, Alexandro Stradella, had the misfortune to give offence to an entire Roman family. The haughty nobles determined to have revenge. They hired a band of assassins to waylay the musician on his return from a church and murder him.

On the appointed evening they came to the church. Alexandro, little dreaming of any danger, entered the choir, and began to play and sing a most sweet and touching melody. He had just composed the piece, and he was now playing it for the first time. "*Pieta, Signore, di me dolente* ; Have mercy on me, O Lord, have mercy on me, look on me in my sadness ; condemn me not in justice, but pardon me in mercy." These were the words he sang. And as the touching melody rose and swelled, filling the whole church with its melancholy strains, and then sank and died away like the sad wailing of a broken heart, there was not one there who could repress his tears. Even the hardened assassins, those men of blood who, without a shudder could murder the innocent virgin and the helpless babe, even they were moved, and the tears glistened in their dark eyes. They sheathed their poniards, and they vowed a vow that they would never strike at the heart of him who could sing so sweetly.

Music has power to raise the drooping spirits, and to soothe the troubled soul. The Holy Scriptures tell us that when King Saul saw that God had abandoned him on account of his sins, a deep melancholy settled on him, and his soul was harassed by an evil spirit ; and when those fits of sadness came on him, his face looked dark and scowling, like one in despair. Messengers were sent all over the land to find a good musician who would play for the king and charm away his grief. They found

the youthful David who was renowned for his skill in playing on the harp.

Now, whenever the evil spirit came upon Saul, David stood before him, and sang and touched his harp with such marvellous sweetness that the evil spirit was forced to flee away, and hope and joy revived again in the bosom of the unhappy king.

No wonder, then, if the Church has employed music to enhance the sublimity and grandeur of her divine worship and to raise the minds of the faithful to God and fix them as it were upon their future home in heaven. But it is not every kind of music that produces upon the soul such wondrous and wholesome effects. It is only true ecclesiastical music that has such sweet, enrapturing power. The character of this music is described by St. Bernard, in a letter to the Abbot Ærremacens: "The style of Church music," he says, "is full of gravity, being neither lascivious nor rustic; sweet without being frivolous, soothing to the ear, but so also as to move the heart. It should appease sadness and mitigate anger; it should fecundate rather than diminish the sense of the words."

There was never any affectation or levity in true ecclesiastical music. The Church has always been so impressed with a sense of the importance of it as being the only kind adapted to Catholic worship, that all music composed by heretics was prohibited from being used in the Church by a synod in the year 1567. In fact, Catholic music is the sister of Catholic manners. It is the expression of faith, hope, and charity; it is the voice of penance, of simplicity and love. However rich, however ravishing, this was its essential character. What musicians were those who composed the sublime Masses that raised

souls to heaven, wherein the music consisted entirely in a simple phrase of the chant in an artless and even popular air, but which, directed by an all-powerful harmony to suit the different parts of the Mass, could express so many religious sentiments as, for instance, at the "*Kyrie*" those of submission and piety; at the "*Gloria in excelsis*," those of admiration and adoration; at the "*Passus*," those of suffering; at the "*Resurrexit*," those of joy; at the "*Agnus Dei*," those of gratitude and peace. The plain chant in Holy Week irresistibly affects the soul with a sadness unutterable. The "*Stabat Mater*" places the Blessed Virgin before our eyes, as if with the pencil of Raphael; the "*Miserere*" moves the soul to its centre; the funeral office is terrific with the voice of death, sublime like the angel's announcement of Resurrection; and one turns pale with fear and admiration at the "*Dies iræ*" which is sung at the dead man's bier. The style of music for singing the preface and the "*Pater noster*," and for chanting the psalms at Vespers, and at other parts of the divine service, has about it a simple grandeur, and is so exquisitely touching that, independently of those claims to our respect which it possesses by its venerable antiquity, it has been regarded with enthusiasm, through its own intrinsic merits, by some amongst the most celebrated composers and writers on music.

But these were the inspirations of men in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; a Dufai de Chimai, a Binchois de Paris, an Ockeghen of Bavaria, a Leteintwier of Nivelles, a Josquin of Cambray, and such like.

The moderns have cultivated more and more the luxury of harmonic accompaniments and instrumental concord, but only to promote the fantastic interest of a con-

fused entertainment. The best judges sigh after the simple elevation of the ancient style, and recognize their chief masters in the first composers of the old simple harmonies of the Church.

Under the inspiration of faith, art was a great and holy thing. It was the reflection of God. It was the invisible world, the soul world. Palestrina and Mozart composed figured music equal in solemnity and feeling to the noblest tones of the Gregorian Chant.

Under the influence of Catholicity, music sent forth sounds such as the ear of man had never before heard. Truly, no tongue can be adequate to give an idea of the impression produced by the plain song of the choir. While the Gregorian Chant rises, you seem to hear the whole Catholic Church behind you responding. It exhales a perfume of Christianity, an odor of penitence and of compunction which overcome you. No one cries—How admirable! but by degrees the return of those monotonous melodies penetrates one, and as it were impregnates the soul, and if to these be added personal recollections a little sad, one feels one's self weep without ever dreaming of judging, or of appreciating, or of learning the airs which we hear.

In regard to art, we may pronounce without hesitation that men who never in their hands bear the olive branch, having lost the faculty of prayer, the thrilling emotion in presence of the Father and Creator of the world, who, in short, experience nothing but ordinary sensations when they hear the chants of the Church, must be degraded beings, insensible to the magnificence of nature, deaf to the nightingale or to the murmur of the woods, dead to music, and susceptible of no enthusiasm but of objects disgusting and absurd.

Such, then, was the ecclesiastical music during the Middle Ages, till the commencement of its decline, which, according to the natural order of things, was contemporaneous with the decline of faith and the introduction of the new opinions ; for a change of manners necessarily superinduced a change in the style of music. In the fifteenth century a profane theatrical music began to be introduced into churches, which was censured by Pope Benedict XIV, in his encyclical letter in the year of the Jubilee, and in his works, in which he called upon all bishops to correct this abuse. It reached such a height that the Fathers of the Council of Trent deliberated whether they ought not to abolish all music in the churches except the Gregorian. Satan seemed to have crept into the paradise of man on earth, the house of God. The chants were left to profane artists, who substituted a hypophrygian style, consisting of fanciful digressions and exaggerated bombastic flourishes, for the ancient simplicity, the dignity of the priesthood, and the reverence of God. Anthems were sacrificed to exhibit the fantastic powers of vain men, who knew nothing of devotion. False character, false expression, and frivolity, under the title of brilliant execution, became the prevailing vices of music. This kind of music, full of insolent grandeur, noisy, tedious, and abounding in insipid repetitions, adulatory and suited to unstable minds, indicated clearly enough the influence of the new spirit which had superseded the reign of faith and Catholic devotion. Such music is an abomination in the holy place ; it is a mockery of what is most holy, and an insult to Catholic faith and worship. What should we say if at the funeral of a dearly beloved friend or relative the hired musicians

would play some giddy or voluptuous waltz? How great would have been our indignation had we been present on Mount Calvary while our Blessed Lord hung bleeding and dying on the Cross, to hear the music of some lascivious dance at that awful moment when the sun hid its light, when the rocks burst asunder, when even the very dead rose from their graves to take part in the universal sorrow of nature at the death of the Creator! But we still celebrate the death of our dearest and best friend, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; what propriety is there then for lascivious music at such a solemn moment? In the holy Mass is renewed the awful scene of Calvary. What room can there be then for senseless, sensual music at this holy and tremendous sacrifice? Unfortunately, many of our so-called Catholic choirs remind one of the motley crew that were present at the crucifixion of our Blessed Saviour. At that awful moment there might be seen sneering Jews, and cold and indifferent heathens; there were present proud, self-conceited men, and vain, lascivious women, whose presence only served to increase the sufferings of the dying Saviour.

But how sweet, how devotional, on the contrary, is the harmony of youthful and aged voices, joining in saintly chorus. By such homage of praise we join the heavenly spirits in their uninterrupted songs of adoration, love, and praise, and it is such music and singing that even the holy angels join in to help us to honor and praise our Lord and Saviour.

In a procession at Valencia, in which Blessed Nicholas Fattori was carrying the Blessed Sacrament, there came all at once a flock of birds, forming a crown just above our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, singing most

melodiously, and steadily accompanying the procession, their warbling notes harmonizing beautifully with the ecclesiastical chant. The great servant of God, being afterwards asked what he thought of those birds, answered with a smile, that they were angels who had come from heaven to join the procession, to honor and sing with them the praises of their divine Lord and King.

It is by such music that we express the spiritual joy of our hearts in his heavenly mystery, and excite both ourselves and others to holy jubilation and devotion.

St. Augustine tells us that soon after his conversion to God, he was moved by the sacred singing at the church to shed abundance of sweet tears.

But such holy joy, such interior devotion, cannot be produced by opera music, and by hired opera singers. They do not and they cannot represent the angelic choirs. Those sudden bursts of deafening noise, those tempests of sound, mechanically sent forth in impetuous streams, are not in accordance with the still, peaceful voice of heaven; but are well calculated to draw the hearts of the devout worshippers from the altar and make them violate the precept of the Church prescribing to hear Mass with devotion. They are calculated to make many go to church as to a theatre, and behave there, in presence of the divine Majesty, as in a place of amusement. Instead of being honored by such music and singing, the Lord feels deeply offended. It is only the devil who is delighted and honored thereby. Let such soft and effeminate music be forever shunned with abhorrence and banished from every Catholic Church, as the corruption of the heart and the poison of virtue.

CHAPTER XXIII.

REGULATIONS FOR SACRED MUSIC.

Sacred Music is a very important subject that has excited special attention of late years, and there have been diverse opinions among well-meaning and well-informed men as to the best means of attaining reform of abuses and improvement. Naturally we attach a supreme importance to whatever direction may come from the Holy See.

The Congregation of Rites has given a series of rules to the dioceses of Italy. These rules strike us as eminently practical and, though given to Italy only, as affording a model which may in part at least be followed even in our comparatively limited facilities in this country.

The following is a translation of these rules.

MONSIGNOR: In order to apply an efficacious remedy to the grave abuses which have been introduced into sacred music in several churches of Italy, the regulation adjoined to this letter has been drawn up; this regulation, by the care of the Society of St. Cecilia conjointly with the Ecclesiastical authority, has been already enforced in the archdioceses of Naples, Milan and elsewhere, and has obtained the full approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff.

In bringing this to the knowledge of Your Lordship, I request you to see that the rules contained in the document are accepted in the churches of your diocese asserving to maintain in its majesty and holiness this so important part of the Sacred Liturgy and to exclude unsuitable and profane melodies.

Trusting that Your Lordship, in your prudent pastoral care, will labor to reduce to practice in the diocese intrusted to you the prescriptions of this regulation, it is with pleasure, etc.,

LAWRENCE SALVIATI,

Secretary of the Congregation of Rites.

REGULATIONS FOR SACRED MUSIC.

SECTION I.

GENERAL RULES FOR SACRED FIGURED MUSIC, VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL, ALLOWED AND FORBIDDEN IN THE CHURCH.

ART. 1. The vocal *figured* music allowed in the Church is that only whose grave and pious chants are suitable to the house of the Lord and to divine praise and serve, in following the sense of the sacred word, to excite devotion in the faithful. The composition of vocal figured music shall be guided by these principles, even when accompanied by organ or other instrument.

ART. 2. The figured music of the organ ought to respond to the strong, harmonious and grave character of that instrument. The instrumental ought generally to support the chant and not drown it with noise. Original interludes of organ and orchestra ought always to be in accord with the gravity of Sacred Liturgy.

ART. 3. The proper language of our Church being the Latin, that language alone shall be employed in the composition of sacred figured music. *Motets* shall be composed to words taken from the Sacred Scriptures, the Breviary, the Roman Missal, the hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas or other Saint and Doctor, and prayers approved and used in the Church.

ART. 4. The vocal and instrumental music forbidden in the church is that which by its character or the form it assumes, tends to the distraction of those who hear it in the house of God.

SECTION II.

SPECIAL PROHIBITIONS AS TO SINGING IN CHURCH.

ART. 5. *It is expressly forbidden to have in the church any singing composed through motives or memories of the theatre or of a profane character ; also singing the composition of which assumes a form too light or suggestive of tender passion, as for instance cavallette, recitatives excessively impressed according to the custom of the theatre, etc. Solos, duos, trios, are permitted provided their character is that of sacred melody and they form a part of the whole composition.*

ART. 6. All music is forbidden in which words of the sacred text are omitted even in the least part, transposed, mutilated, repeated too frequently, or are made unintelligible.

ART. 7. It is forbidden to divide into pieces too much apart the verses of the sacred text in the *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo*, etc., at the expense of the unity of the whole, as also to omit or go over in haste the singing of certain parts of the office, such as the responses to the celebrant, the Introit sequence, the Sanctus, the Benedictus, the Agnus Dei, at the Mass, the Psalms, Antiphons, hymn, Magnificat at Vespers. Nevertheless the omission of the Gradual, Tract, Offertory, Communion in certain particular circumstances, for instance the lack of voices, is tolerated with the organ supplying the place of these omissions.

ART. 8. It is forbidden to make a disorderly medley of figured music and plain chant : consequently it is forbidden to make what are called musical *points* (Organ points) in the *Passion*, in which the liturgical office ought to be scrupulously adhered to. Only responses of the body of singers in polyphonous music are permitted, after the model of the Roman school, especially as in Palestrina.

ART. 9. All singing is forbidden that prolongs the Divine Offices beyond the prescribed limits of noon for Mass, of the Angelus for Vespers and Benediction : except in churches that have privileges and customs not condemned, and can extend the offices beyond these hours, this being left to the decision of the ordinary.

ART. 10. The use of certain inflections of the voice that are too affected is forbidden, as also to make too much noise in keeping time and in giving orders to the musicians, to turn the back to the altar, to talk much or to do anything else unsuitable to the holy place. It is desirable that the singers' place be not constructed over the main door of the church, and that the musicians be out of view of the audience as far as possible, according as in prudence the ordinary shall direct.

SECTION III.

SPECIAL PROHIBITIONS AS TO ORGAN AND OTHER INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE CHURCH.

ART. 11. It is strictly forbidden to play in the church even the smallest part of a recollection of a theatrical opera : dance-pieces of any kind, such as polkas, waltzes, mazourkas, minuets, etc., etc.; profane pieces, such as national hymns, popular, comic or love strains, romances, etc.

ART. 12. Instruments that are too noisy are forbidden, such as drums, base-drums, cymbals, etc., and also instruments of a foreign character and the *piano-forte*. Nevertheless, trumpets, flutes, tymbals and others of that kind which were in use in the people of Israel to accompany the praises of God, the songs and the psalms of David, are permitted on condition they are used with skill and moderation, especially on occasion of the *Tantum Ergo*, at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

ART. 13. It is forbidden to improvise (*a fantaisie*), as they say, on the organ except in the case of those who know how to do it suitably, that is in a manner to respect not only the rules of musical art but also those rules that look to the piety and recollection of the faithful.

ART. 14. In composition the following rules must be observed :

That the *Gloria* be not divided into many separate parts with solos according to dramatic manner. That the *Credo* also be composed continuously, and, if divided into concerted pieces, that the pieces be so arranged as to form a well-united whole. That solos be avoided as far as possible, and cadences after the manner of the theatre, with vocal outbursts, not to speak of loud cries that distract the faithful from devotion. And above all let care be taken to keep the words in the order they occupy in the text, without interverting.

SECTION IV.

[The *Journal De Rome* omits article 15 and 16, remarking that they contain recommendations as to books, and that outside of the indications of the Secretariate here given all liberty is left to the ordinaries.—T. F. M.]

ART. 17. Besides the repertory of sacred published music, it is permitted to use manuscript music such as is kept in several churches and chapels and other ecclesiastical institutions, provided the choice be made by a special commission entitled of *St. Cecilia*, that shall be formed in every diocese, and have at its head a *Diocesan inspector of sacred music* depending immediately upon the ordinary.

ART. 18. There shall be permitted in the churches the execution of those pieces only, published or unpublished, that catalogued in the *Diocesan Repertory Index*, bear the signature stamp and endorsement of the *commission of Saint Cecilia* and of its inspector president, who, in accord with the commission and always under the dependency of the ordinary, without prejudice of local superiors, can use a surveillance on the spot as to the execution of music, can call for examination in the sacristy of the pieces executed or to be executed, can verify them to see if they are in accordance with the rules and the papers that have the approval of the signature, stamp, and endorsement, and can make report to the ordinary and can call for the application of energetic measures against transgressors.

ART. 19. Organists and choir-masters shall give all their care and attention to the best possible execution of the music listed in the repertory. They can employ their knowledge to enrich it with new compositions, provided they conform to these rules, from which nobody can dispense himself. Even the members themselves of the commission shall be subjected to the mutual revision of their works.

ART. 20. To all parish priests and rectors of churches is intrusted the application of the *Repertory Index* of sa-

cred music gathered by the *commission of St. Cecilia* and approved by the ordinary, under penalty of being called to order in case of transgression. The *Repertory Index* can be increased by addition of new compositions as time goes on.

ART. 21. The aforesaid commissions shall be composed of ecclesiastics and also of laymen expert in music and animated by a deeply Catholic spirit. The *Diocesan Inspector* shall always be an ecclesiastic. The appointment of all the members belongs of right to the diocesan ordinaries.

SECTION V.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT OF SACRED MUSIC AND OF THE SCHOOLS.

ART. 22. To prepare a better future for ecclesiastical music in Italy, it is desirable that the ordinaries be enabled to found and perfect, if already existing in their ecclesiastical institutions, especially in seminaries, schools of *figured* music following the most perfect and authorized methods. To this purpose it would be seasonable to open in the principal centres of the peninsula special schools of sacred music, to form good singers, organists and choir-masters, as has been done at Milan.

ART. 23. The present regulation shall be sent to all the ordinaries, who will communicate it to the clergy, organists, and choir-masters of their respective dioceses and shall be enforced one month after the communication of the ordinary.

This regulation shall be affixed on a tablet placed in the church near the organist's place so that it may never, for any reason, be transgressed.

Songs in the Vernacular Tongue during Divine Service.
Admodum Reverende Domine.

Sacrarum rituum Congregatio perlectis ab infra scripto Secretario litteris a te ad hanc apostolicam Sedem missis sub die 30 Decembris superioris anni, laudandam censiut tuam solertiam, qua hactenus saltem aliquid consequi potuisti in ista tua parochia circa cantum in celebratione liturgicarum functionum introducendum Ecclesiæ præscriptionibus consentaneum. Porro maximopere tibi commendat, ut pergas eadem sedulitate ac prudentia sensim sine sensu remove abusum canendi cantica, cujuscunque generis ea sint, in vernacula lingua *intra sacram liturgiam seu functiones proprie liturgicas* : cum de cetero minime vetita sint pia cantica seu approbatæ cantiunculæ, quæ presertim in Germania devote cantari solent in sacris mere extraliturgicis, præcipuo vero coram Sanctissimo Sacramento exposito. Præ oculis habito Statuta Congregationis S. Cæciliæ approbatæ a sa. sua., Pio Papa IX per Breve die 16. Dec. 1870.

Quæ dum tibi significo cuncta a Domino fausta ex animo adprecor.

Tuus studios. LAUR. SALVATI, S. R. C. Secretarius.
 Romæ die 3. Aprilis, 1883.

At the request of the Rev. John Bosco, Pope Pius IX has granted the following Indulgences to those who promote the singing of hymns and spiritual canticles in honor of God, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the saints :

1. An Indulgence of one year to him who sometimes in public or in private teaches gratuitously the singing of sacred hymns ; and another Indulgence of 100 days each time they are practised in a public or in a private oratory.

2. A Plenary Indulgence to be gained at the close of the month of May by those who in the course of the month shall have devoted themselves in a special manner to singing in the Church, and who shall have assisted at the devotion of the month of May.

3. A Plenary Indulgence once a month to those who on at least four festivals, or even week-days, shall have taken part in singing, or in teaching others to sing sacred songs ; and this Indulgence is to be gained on that day on which they shall have approached the sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. To gain the above-mentioned Indulgences the hymns must have the approval of the Ecclesiastical authorities.

4. These Indulgences are applicable likewise to the souls in Purgatory.

Romæ apud S. Petrum die 7 Aprilis 1858.

Benigne annuimus juxta petita.—

PIUS P. P. IX.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE USE AND OBSERVANCE OF THE CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH.

The word *Ceremony* is derived from the ancient word "*ceres*," which means *holy*. "Men cannot be collected in any name of religion," says St. Augustine, "unless the bond of certain signs, as if of visible sacraments, should unite them together;" (Contr. Faustum, Lib. xix, c. xi.) from which Duns Scotus infers that even under the law of nature there must have been ceremonies divinely instituted; (In Lib. iv, Lent. Dist. I. q. 7.) for though they are nothing in themselves, they are yet acts of religion exteriorly manifested, by which the mind is excited to veneration of holy things, and elevated to heavenly objects; and by them piety is nourished, charity enkindled, faith increased, the worship of God is adorned, and religion maintained. The simple are thus instructed, and the true faithful kept distinct from false Christians. Christ himself hardly ever performed a miracle without using some ceremony, as when he made damp clay, and stretched out his hand to touch, and wrote upon the ground.

The body should pay its homage as well as the soul. External homage is the natural and necessary appendix to internal worship; for we are so constituted by nature that all the sentiments of our soul show themselves outwardly and become painted in the demeanor of the whole body, insomuch that it is scarcely possible to love God sincerely with all the heart and not break forth in his

praise and manifest the interior sense of divine charity by some or other external signs.

Why do men love ceremony in religion? Because they wish to enjoy life in all the faculties and divisions of their nature. To live is to be happy; and the highest life is that which is spiritual and divine. Therefore we desire that in this life all our perceptions should participate in a divine object and consequently that our senses, as well as our reason should be excited by a divine object. Even the disposition of body in relation to things external, resulting from a habit of devotion, instead of being a scandal to a profound thinker, may only remind him of what Malebranche says, "that everything which passes mechanically within us is worthy of the wisdom of our Maker." Besides, man being constituted of a body and a soul, it is just that the body, with its various capabilities, which are so many gifts of God, should come forward on the side of religion, especially as it is the nature of man to need external assistance to enable him to rise to the meditation of divine things.

Internal piety, therefore, requires to be excited and nourished by ceremonies or certain sensible signs.

Moreover, every man ought to be religious and pious not only so as to be conscious within himself that he worships God, but also to the extent of promoting the piety and instruction of his fellow-men, especially of those who are entrusted to his care; and this cannot be done unless we profess by some external sign the intimate sense of religion with which we are animated.

These reasons for religious ceremonies are dictated by common sense or rather by God, the author of common sense. But Almighty God did not leave to the dictate

of common sense the minute manner in which he wishes to be honored and worshipped. Hence, in the Old Law, he prescribed minutely the ceremonies according to which he was to be honored; and in order that no one should despise the least of the ceremonies, he said to the people: "Hear, O Israel, it is I, thy God, who speaks to thee!"

And after having commanded obedience and respect for the ceremonies he repeats frequently that it is not a counsel that he gives, but a law which he imposes; that they should not forget it; that their fidelity to it would be the source of the most abundant blessings, whilst their negligence in observing it would draw down upon them many miseries and maledictions. "*Audi, Israel; cæremonias et judicia quæ ego loquor hodie in auribus vestris, custodi; præcepta et cæremonias, atque judicia, quæ ego mando tibi, observa, et cave ne quando oblivis caris Domini Dei tui, et negligas cæremonias quas ego præcipio. Custodi cæremonias, . . . ut bene sit tibi. Quod si audire nolueris vocem Domini Dei tui, ut custodias cæremonias, quas ego præcipio tibi, venient super te omnes maledictiones istæ: Maledictus eris in civitate.* (Deuteron.)

We know with what severity God formerly punished the least transgressions of these ceremonies. Nahab and Abui, Oza and some others transgressed them in seemingly very unimportant points and under circumstances that seemed to justify the transgressions; but they were struck dead in a manner so terrible that all the people were in consternation. God is always the same. "*Ego Dominus, et non mutor.*" (Malach. iii, 6.) How much cause of fear for certain priests who make light of the ceremonies of the Church and even neglect to learn them!

Were the ceremonies of the Old Law as venerable as ours and were they prescribed for mysteries as sacred and sublime as ours? The ceremonies of the Church are prescribed by the infallible light and sovereign authority which she has received from the Holy Ghost. The Church leaves nothing to arbitration in the administration of the sacraments, in the oblation of the Holy Sacrifice, in public prayers and in all that of which the divine service is composed; she regulates all with a care and solicitude that evidently show that she desires priests to hold her ceremonies in high esteem and observe them most conscientiously. This is clear from one of her decrees made in the Council of Trent: "Si quis dixerit receptos et approbatos Ecclesiæ Catholicæ ritus in solenni sacramentorum administratione adhiberi consuetos aut contemni aut sine peccato a ministris pro libitu omitti aut in novos alios per quemcumque Ecclesiarum pastorem mutari posse, anathema sit." (Sess. vii, can. 13.) The anathema or excommunication is the greatest punishment that the Church inflicts. Against whom does she pronounce it here? Not against those who change, despise or omit, at their option, the rites which she has received and approved, but against those who *merely say* that any pastor can change, despise or omit them without sin. If she treats with such rigor those who *merely say* they can change, despise or omit the rites, will she spare those who are actually guilty of changing or omitting them? They say, it is but a little ceremony; it is troublesome; what harm can there be in omitting it, provided they do not despise it? Deplorable blindness! To despise the ceremonies is a great evil; to omit them is another that the Council distinguishes from the first. Anathema to him

who says he can despise them, and anathema also to him who says he can omit them. The reason is because in the ceremonial and discipline of the Church there is no part without its religious meaning. That which might seem the most trifling has its proper object, and serves in some way or other to promote habits of humility, order, patience, recollection, and religion, so as to build up the Catholic character. The above-mentioned sentence of the Church is, therefore, most important and beneficial; it saves Catholic piety from being at the mercy of weak, ignorant, though perhaps well-meaning men, who, in proportion to their weakness and ignorance, are generally vain of being reformers or modifiers of ancient things.

We must, then, observe the rubrics and ceremonies with punctuality and devotion.

Punctuality consists in observing all the ceremonies at the time prescribed and as they are prescribed, not omitting any of them, as they are all commanded. What right have we to divide our obedience? If, by too much precipitation or slowness, the ceremonies are not in harmony with the words to which they relate, they become unmeaning, and perfectly useless. If, for instance, instead of inclining the head at the name of Jesus, I incline it too soon or too late, pronouncing some other words at the inclination of the head; or if, in the offering of the wine at the beginning of the sacrifice, I lower the chalice in pronouncing the word 'ascendat' instead of holding it up until I have said: "*in odorem suavitatis ascendat.*" Thus I fail to accomplish the end for which the rubrics have been instituted. We must, therefore, perform them at the time prescribed, and not make a little inclination when a profound one is prescribed, or vice versâ.

But what gives life to all the ceremonies is devotion. If we are careful to animate by faith these exterior practices we adore God in spirit and in truth ; we please him, says St. Cyprian, by the movements of the body, by the tone of the voice, by all that we do, as being regulated by obedience and love. “*Placendum est divinis oculis et habitu corporis et modo vocis.*” (De Orat.)

These approved ceremonies of the Church are called by Hugh of St. Victor Sacraments of Devotion. He divides them into three classes—the first consisting in things, such as the sprinkling of water, the reception of ashes, the blessing of palms and tapers ; the second, in actions, as the sign of the cross, the insufflations, the extension of hands, genuflexions ; and the third in words, as the invocation of the Blessed Trinity, and that of *Deus in adiutorium*, for words themselves are sometimes sacraments. (Sess. vii, Can. 13.) There would be no end to following theologians in remarking all the uses of these external rites in imprinting the mysteries of our faith on the understanding. They show that, from the exorcisms and insufflations used in baptism, it was easier to understand than the unlearned would have found it from the Scriptures, that children are born under the yoke of the demon and infected with original sin ; that, in like manner, the ashes strewed on the heads of men at the beginning of Lent teach them in a most forcible manner the vanity of all earthly things, and that in Holy Week the solemn ceremonies of the Church recall to their minds and imprint on them a knowledge of the mysteries of human redemption. Certain it is that the Catholic ceremonies, besides answering these ends, conduce in all ages to the defence of the faith against innovators.

The Church, however, has not only ordained her ceremonies with a view to aid the understanding of the unlearned, but she also presents these rites to the affection and understanding of the instructed people. Can one suppose that no permanent moral change would be wrought in the mind by the mere act of slowly and deliberately tracing the sign of the Cross on the forehead, on the lips, and on the heart, when the Gospel is announced in the divine mysteries? Can we suppose that the man accustomed to this practice is as likely to blush at the Cross in society, and to show vile submission to worldly respect, as another who knows of no such practice?

At the end of each lesson in the choral office the reader turns to the altar, saying, "*Tu autem, Domine, miserere nobis;*" because, as holy writers say, even that act of reading cannot be performed without some fault, since, if he read well, the mind is tempted with elation, and if ill, confusion follows; therefore he who reads stands always in need of the mercy of God, lest a work in itself good should be either corrupted by pride or rendered ineffectual by false shame. Can it be thought that to one instructed in this meaning the mere ceremony does not incline him to humility, and warn him to beware how he hears as well as reads the divine word?

The solemnity of the ritual itself has been known to produce permanent conversions. "Brother Theodoric, our monk," says Cæsar of Heisterbach, "as he often told me, when a youth in the world, came merely to visit a certain novice who was his relative, without any idea of being converted. It happened that a certain monk was buried on the same day, and when the community, having said the antiphon *Clementissime Domine*, proceeded then

round the grave with great humility, imploring pardon, saying, ‘*Domine, miserere super peccatore,*’ he was so struck and excited that he who before had resisted all the exhortations of the Abbot Gerrard now sought with many prayers to be received to conversion. So small a matter sufficed to accomplish so great a work.” (I. c. 21.)

After King Clovis had been converted to the faith, and initiated by the holy Bishop Remigius in the truth necessary to be known, this prince went to church to receive the holy sacrament of baptism. The road between the royal palace and the church was superbly adorned, shaded by hangings suspended from above; the walls of the houses were draped with costly silks; the church in which the king was to be baptized was decked out in all its splendor, and in it a sumptuous baptistery was erected, while the air was laden with delicious perfumes. The solemn procession was headed by the whole body of the clergy, one of them bearing the Book of the Holy Gospels. It was preceded by the Cross and a great number of lighted torches, and all implored in melodious tones the help of God and his saints, in the usual prayers of the Church. The king followed, being led by the hand of the saintly bishop. The queen came next, and in her train an innumerable crowd. Now when the king saw the long line of sacred ministers, when he heard their hallowed chants, and witnessed the devout splendor and magnificence of the function, he was inwardly moved, and filled with such joy and consolation that, turning round to the prelate, he asked whether perhaps this was the kingdom of God which had been promised to him should he embrace the faith? “No, Sire,” replied St. Remigius, “this is not the kingdom of God I promised you, but the way that

leads thereto." (In vita Remigii apud Surium, 13, Jan.) From this we may learn the powerful influence which the sacred ceremonies connected with God's worship can exert over our minds, since they availed to soften the heart of the fierce conquerer, accustomed to live amid regal splendor, and to make him think that he was in heaven, when only on the path to the heavenly kingdom.

"Were I to enter the Catholic Church now," says a Protestant writer of the last century, "it would be apt to put me in mind of what St. John tells us he saw once in a vision: 'Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.' These lighted altars made me naturally think of what the good old Simeon said of Christ, 'A light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.'"

Similar are the sentiments expressed by the celebrated Lavater, on finding himself in a Catholic Church. "He does not know Thee, O Jesus Christ, who dishonors even Thy shadow; I honor all things, where I find the intention of honoring Thee. I will love them for Thy sake. I will love them provided I find the least thing which makes me remember Thee. What then do I behold here? What do I hear in this place? Does nothing under these majestic vaults speak to me of Thee? This cross, the golden image, is it not made for Thy honor? The censer which waves round the priest, the *Gloria* sung in choirs, the peaceful light of the perpetual lamp, these lighted tapers—all is done for Thee! Why is the Host

elevated if it be not to honor Thee, O Jesus Christ, who art dead for love of us, because it is no more bread, it is Thy Body ; the believing Church bends the knee. It is in Thy honor alone that these children, early instructed, make the sign of the Cross, that their tongues sing Thy praise, and that they strike their breasts thrice with their little hands. It is for love of Thee, O Jesus Christ, that one kisses the spot which bears Thy adorable Blood ; for Thee the child who serves sounds the little bell, and for Thee, he does all that he does. The riches collected from distant countries, the magnificence of chasubles—all that has relation to Thee. Why are the walls and the high altar of marble clothed with verdant tapestry on the day of the Blessed Sacrament ? For whom do they make a road of flowers ? For whom are these banners embroidered ? When the *Ave Maria* sounds, is it not all for Thee ? Matins, Vespers, Prime, and None, are they not consecrated to Thee ? These bells within a thousand towers, do they not bear Thy image, cast in the very mould ? Is it not for Thee that they send forth their solemn tone ? Is it not under Thy protection, O Jesus Christ, that every man places himself who loves solitude, chastity, and poverty ? Without Thee the Orders of St. Benedict and of St. Bernard would not have been founded. The cloister, the tonsure, the breviary, and the chaplet render testimony of Thee. O delightful rapture, O Jesus Christ, for Thy disciple to trace the marks of Thy finger where the eyes of the world see them not ! O joy ineffable, for souls devoted to Thee to behold in caves and in rocks, in every crucifix placed upon the hills and on the highways, Thy seal and that of Thy love ! Who will not rejoice in the honors of which Thou art the ob-

ject and the soul? Who will not shed tears in hearing the words, 'Jesus Christ be praised?' O the hypocrite who knows that name and answers not with joy, 'Amen;' who says not with an intense transport, 'Jesus be blessed for eternity! for eternity!' " (*Empfindungen eines Protestanten in einer Katholischen Kirche.*)

It is thus that many of those who have distinguished themselves by their hostility to the "*religion of our fathers,*" have admitted that that religion and its rites were venerable. Many of those who had been foremost in vilifying its principles, or in misrepresenting its tenets, have, in the midst of their bigoted bitterness, been compelled to acknowledge that its ceremonies were splendid and impressive. One may often see revilers of this stamp bowing during the celebration of the Mass, and owning that in the forms before them there was something indescribably awful—something in the objects around them that proclaimed the Presence of the Deity—something that was calculated to awaken the inattentive, animate the lukewarm, and shed even over the spirit of the irreligious a feeling of sacred reverence, leading to penitence and to piety. Such have been the admissions of those who had not "faith in them"—the confessions of men who merely gazed upon externals, and looked not beyond the surface. They knew not that the ceremonies which they witnessed were so many high and holy symbols, portraying to the eyes of the faithful the progress, the precepts, the struggles, and the sufferings of him who was offered for the transgressions of mankind. They knew not that *these* constituted the parts, and the aggregate of a sacrifice, enjoined from the beginning as a sacrifice, that to the true children of Christianity is at once a sign of remembrance, and an instrument of propitiation.

It is the Catholic, and he only who beholds these sacred forms in their true light, who joins rightly in those ceremonies, and derives a spiritual advantage from their daily celebration. How necessary it is then that we be thoroughly acquainted with their meaning, with their general tendency, and with each and all of the wonderful incidents which they represent?

Every pastor, therefore, should endeavor to acquire this most interesting and most salutary information and communicate it to his people. For if the various ceremonies of the Mass are well understood, they will greatly incite and foster reverence and the spirit of devotion at the holy Sacrifice; they will inflame the hearts of the faithful with greater love for this inexhaustible treasure of grace, and make them hear Mass in the proper spirit and to the greatest advantage of their souls. Culpable ignorance, then, on this point, amounts to a crime. Reverence and love for our dear Saviour will avoid the reproach of this crime. Reverence and love, too, are our best instructors at Mass, because where they are, not a single movement of the Liturgy can ever be lost, and not a single one will pass without imparting instruction. The Liturgy is the manner which Jesus adopts for the purpose of renewing the great Expiation; every variation as well as every shadow of variation has a significance quite its own.

Reverence and love will take pains, therefore, to examine and understand them in every detail, that not a movement, a word, a whisper, of our dear Lord be lost upon us during the whole time of the holy Sacrifice. From this we learn that we should look well to the explanations which teach with authority the mystic meanings attached to the

various parts and movements of the Mass ; and that they ought to become as much a part of our minds as the meanings which spring up when we hear a sentence spoken or see it written down, or when we look at a picture of some scene which we know well.

We shall not have placed ourselves in a condition perfectly to gather the riches of grace spread at the foot of our unbloody Calvary, unless we have accomplished this small task. Deep reverence and true love will leave nothing undone to learn the lesson well. Again, let us repeat, each movement of the Mass ought to awaken thoughts, like spoken language, in the soul of the "child of benediction."

Wherever there are love and reverence, we may feel assured, not only of a perfect acquaintance with the symbolism of the holy rites and the holy vestments, but of that profound attention and devotion which the august Sacrifice should demand and inspire.

The heart and mind will be united with every proceeding about the altar, will be ever warm and watchful, so that nothing shall be presented to God without the companionship of the rational affection and worship of the adorer. Saying or attending at Mass, we shall ever know what we do, and ever do it as we know ; and thus nothing will be lost to us of the mighty favors there to be obtained. Our minds will become the form of that wonderful work of God for man, and we shall attend every day with a renewed and increased feeling of gratitude and awe, because every day is an increased wonder in the increasing number of countless miracles performed before our eyes, for our salvation and the salvation of fallen man generally.

The acquaintance with the meanings of the various movements and proceedings of Mass will make it easy for us to follow the various stages of the Passion in a spirit of love, reverence, gratitude, and sorrow, which is, no doubt, the best way to say or to hear Mass. At every stage our hearts will overflow with affectionate recognition of the love of Jesus, and at every stage we can whisper a prayer for the special objects of our desire on the occasion. Nothing so concentrates the powers of the soul as always to have some special objects to be obtained by the holy Sacrifice. We know it is infinite in value, and therefore impetrates more than a million of worlds could ever need; and we know, moreover, that as the harvest time is given to the reaper's sickle, the abundance is given here to be gathered by the sickle of devotion. The Passion and Death of Jesus have placed and continue to place, the luxuriant growth at our command; we need only the energy of grace and the sickle of holy prayer to depart filled with the good things of God's husbandry. We are poor, only because we will not be rich; weak, only because we will not be strong; hungry and thirsty, because we seek fountains which God has not made to flow, and forget where the rod of his wisdom and power has left us "the rock which is Christ."

Have I entertained for the rubrics and ceremonies the respect due to the divine authority from which they emanate, and to the object for which they have been ordained? Have I shown this respect by studying them and committing them to memory and by observing them faithfully? If it is a shame for a soldier not to know the rules of military drill; if it is a disgrace for a person of high standing not to be acquainted with the rules of

etiquette, it is certainly a greater shame for a priest not to know the rubrics respecting the proper behavior in the sanctuary, and the dispensation of the divine mysteries.

How hard were the rites which the heavenly Father prescribed for his Son when he was about to offer up his life in sacrifice for the atonement of our sins and for the reparation of his honor and glory! The sinful narration of the scenes of suffering through which the divine Lamb and Victim had to pass is most frightful. Ah! what a shame and disgrace for a priest to offer the divine Sacrifice of the Cross without caring much for the exact observance of the rubrics which are prescribed for offering it in a manner pleasing and becoming the divine Majesty!

CHAPTER XXV.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN TRANSACTING AFFAIRS OF IMPORTANCE.

1. Take counsel of God and men.
2. Avoid precipitancy.
3. Be resolute in your undertakings.
4. Proceed with circumspection.
5. Avoid duplicity in dealing with others.

1. In transacting affairs of importance, we must take counsel of God and men. "You must," wrote St. Vincent de Paul to a certain superior, "show in all things your dependence on Jesus Christ, the Son of God; by this I mean to say that, when you are about to do something you must previously consider whether it is in accordance with the principles of Jesus Christ. If it is so, then say: Let us do it in God's name. But if it is not so, then say: No, I will not do it. Likewise when a good work is to be done, say to the Son of God: My Lord, what wouldst Thou do, shouldst Thou be in my place? In what manner wouldst Thou instruct this people, or console this afflicted person, or encourage this despairing sinner? Show this dependence also by your obedience to your Superior. We should remember that Superiors have learned a good many things both by their own experience and by the grace of their state. I mention this in order that you may not undertake anything of importance without having previously informed your Superiors about it. Should this not be possible for good

reasons that do not allow you to wait for our decision, then go to another Superior nearest to you, and ask him what he would do, were he in your place? We know from experience, that God blesses this manner of proceeding; but those, on the contrary, who did not act thus, entangled themselves in affairs which caused great annoyance and embarrassment both to themselves and to us." When Vincent himself was asked to give his advice he said that he would, in all humility and confidence, recommend himself to God and then represent to himself the hour of death, considering what advice he would then give.

"A Superior," writes St. Alphonsus, "should never think himself so wise as to be able to direct a whole Institute by his own light and wisdom. He always stands in need of prayer and advice. He should never judge things rashly and without mature consideration, but should well reflect over the matter before he gives his decision." "In matters of importance," says St. Ignatius, "after long and deep reflection, do not omit to consult others, and that the matter may be well considered, limit these conversations to the space of one hour, during which time no other topic is to be introduced. Look rather to the end and consequences of things, than to the principles thereof. Is the matter of great importance, take as much time as possible to reflect upon it, and that you may not be misled by passion, regard the affair as if it were another man's business and not yours. Whilst you thus dispose all things with foresight and prudence, acknowledge yourself as a useless servant, abandoning all to God, and looking only to him for the success of your operations, and when any point has been determined by

your counsellors and yourself, do not forget to retire, and then treat with God upon the matter in prayer, protesting before him that you wish for nothing but the accomplishment of his holy will. Acquire the habit never to carry anything into execution until it has been concluded in this manner."

"In domestic affairs," it is said in the life of St. Vincent de Paul, "he even consulted his lay-brothers, not believing at all that this was below his dignity, but rather calculated to inspire the subjects with greater love and esteem for their Superior and to draw the blessing of God upon what had been determined upon in this manner." Hence Rodriguez remarks on this subject, that it is a great fault, even in Superiors, not to receive or ask for the advice of others; wherefore it is generally said, that a man of limited talents, but knowing his own defects, and willing to listen to the good counsel of others, is more fit to govern than another who has greater talents, but who is full of self-conceit and thinks himself so experienced in all things, that he feels offended when he is admonished, or when an advice is given to him.

Holy Scripture abounds in passages confirming this truth. "Have you not seen," says Solomon, "one who thinks himself a very able man? There is more to be hoped for from a fool than from him. The carriage of a fool appears very good in his own eyes; but a wise man hearkens to counsel. I am wisdom, that make my abode in counsel. Where there is a great deal of good counsel, there salvation is to be found." (Prov. xi, 14.)

Although Moses was very wise and enlightened himself, yet he failed not to take the advice of Jethro, his father-in law, who advised him to choose some persons

who would assist him in the government and in the administration of justice. "You do not well," said Jethro to him, seeing him do everything himself, "to consume yourself with imprudent labor ; what you undertake is above your strength, and you can never be able alone to sustain it." (2 Exod. xviii, 17-18.) Moses took this advice in all humility and put it forthwith into practice ; he did not act like those who, when advised well, seem to feel much displeased with the adviser, thinking that no one less able than they themselves, should be so intrusive as to advise them.

St. Peter, the head of the Apostles, also yielded to St. Paul in the question of the circumcision, and when admonished by St. Paul, he did not despise him for having persecuted the Church, nor did he say : "I am the supreme head of the Church ; it belongs to me to decide in this matter ; to me every one must listen !"

Some years ago the students of a certain seminary were examined before their ordination. After the examination, the Vicar-General said to them : "My dear young friends, you have shown much talent and learning. Permit me, however, to assure you that all you have learned is as nothing to what you have yet to learn in the ministry." And the Vicar-General was right. It is one thing to be able to tell one color from another, and another thing to be able to blend the colors like a skilful artist.

The young priest must, of course, use books ; he must study—some unhappily do not study enough—but he must also ask and take advice. It is a great blessing for a young priest if he can spend the first years of his ministry with an older priest who is kind and virtuous. The experience of a good priest who has grown gray in the service of God is an inestimable treasure.

2. *Avoid Precipitancy.*—"We live in an age of untiring activity," says Father Coffin, C.S.S.R., (Preface to *Mysteries of Faith*,) "in an age which measures success by immediate, visible, and palpable results, in which no sooner is a work begun than men are at once impatient to see its completion. The world cannot bear to work step by step, to watch the proper place and time and occasion for its designs: all must be done at once; to begin and finish must be, were it possible, simultaneous; calmly to wait and let things maturely grow is considered a sign of weakness, is in itself a failure. The patience and forbearance and the gentle providence of God, are forgotten; neither do men remember how even Wisdom itself, though 'she reacheth from end to end mightily, yet ordereth all things sweetly.' The saints, enlightened and guided by the Holy Ghost as they were, thought and acted quite differently, knowing that too hasty desires trouble and disturb the peace of the soul, confound its thoughts, quicken its emotions, disconcert its actions, corrupt its will, destroy grace, prevent the co-operation of God and prove that we are influenced by nature alone."

In all his works St. Vincent de Paul would always proceed calmly, noiselessly and considerately. In order to imitate the example of Jesus Christ, he would choose those means to reach his end, which were of a more gentle nature and would excite less the attention of others. Thus he avoided many intrigues of those who were disposed to work against him. However, when it happened that difficulties and obstacles were thrown into his way, he would not try to remove them by main force, although he could have done so very easily, his influence at court

being very great ; he preferred to wait patiently until God would incline the hearts of his adversaries in favor of his designs. For this very reason all his works became so much the more permanently established. Many would often wonder how a man who was so slow and backward in carrying out his designs, could bring about so many astonishing works. But the wise and discreet servant of the Lord was thoroughly convinced that the success of important undertakings was prevented by nothing so much as by precipitation and impetuosity. He often used to say that precipitated affairs would generally turn out failures, but, on the contrary, to delay them would never prove disadvantageous, but always profitable ; for by acting thus, we gain time to consider and examine carefully all difficulties and reasons to the contrary, to discover the best time and opportunity for success, to become more assured of the divine Will, to keep better pace with God's Providence, and thus to have the great consolation, that the Lord himself commenced and accomplished all works, which we undertook for the Divine glory. He was always afraid to encroach upon the course of Providence and to get as it were ahead of our Lord. God perfectly justified his manner of proceeding by enabling him to accomplish more within forty years than many others would have done within whole centuries. The best undertakings, he would say, often turn out bad by precipitation, because there is generally too much self-will in them, which considers good and practicable only what it approves itself as such. The issue of affairs will always show how false this is. The good designed by God is brought about, as it were, by itself, even before we think of it.

Relying on the word of Christ : "Seek ye first the

kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you," he let divine Providence manage his affairs, firmly believing that the members of his Society would never lack the necessities of life as long as they would faithfully live up to their rules. But for that he would not be less industrious than God requires of us. His confidence in God was firm and unshaken, but not presumptuous. He did what was in his power. His principle, which he often repeated to his brethren, was, "begin every affair after mature reflection, then continue and finish it." If any one acted rashly and without consulting others he was sure to be punished by him. Hence he would depose from their office all those who, without previous permission, would tear down or build up something, notwithstanding the good intention they might have had in doing so. "For," said he, "if every one wishes to follow his own ideas, the dependence ordained by God would be destroyed altogether, and in our houses we would see nothing but constant changes and disorders." When, however, the house of God and the salvation of souls were in question, no expenses would be too great for the saint. But as to his own support and that of his Society, he would permit nothing superfluous, but, on the contrary, he would cut off from the necessities of life as much as discretion allowed, both to mortify the desires of the flesh and to be better enabled to bestow alms upon the poor. This was also his course of action in the erection of buildings. He would never without an evident necessity contract too heavy a debt. "For," said he, "we cannot expect from God more than is necessary; wherefore we must not undertake anything superfluous." The Superior of

one of his houses most earnestly begged of him permission to commence a certain building, because the Missionary priests, as he said, were dissatisfied with their bad dwellings and could not keep up a regular discipline. Vincent answered him as follows: "You write to me for permission soon to commence your new house; but, we cannot think of such a thing as yet. It is a great charity of the Lord to have given us this house, which is good enough until he is pleased to give us a better one. We are not in fault for the evil consequences of which you speak, because we cannot help them for the present. We imitate the Lord in his conduct towards his people. For whole centuries he permitted great disorders and the loss of numberless souls, in order to establish an order altogether divine, and open the way of salvation for all by the life, sufferings, and death of his Son, whom he sent at the appointed time when by so many exhortations, prophecies and longing desires, his people had been prepared for his arrival. Should I, perhaps, make a wrong application of this, I beg for better instruction, and should you be able to give it, I most willingly accept it."

"Would we learn to be patient as God is patient," says Father Coffin, C.SS.R., in the above cited Preface, "to order things, as he does, *sweetly*, to be content with the knowledge that, when we have done our best, whether in the work of our own sanctification or in our efforts for the good and salvation of others, we must after all, wait patiently, and hope and pray, leaving the result to the good providence of God. If we cherish hidden ways, and humble, unpretending aims, and rest satisfied that we are only allowed to plant and sow, while

it is for others to reap the fruits of our labors, then let us try to live with Jesus in his hidden life, and not be over-anxious to see the results and success even of our purest undertaking; for God himself, after having waited four thousand years to redeem mankind, thought it not too long to wait even yet a period of thirty more, before he accomplished that work of love for which he had expressly come into the world."

3. *Be resolute in your undertakings.*—"No difficulties," says St. Vincent de Paul, "should deter us from carrying into execution what has been determined upon after calm and mature deliberation." When, after mature reflection, he had resolved upon something, and finding it at the same time in accordance with the principles of Jesus Christ, nothing was able to shake him in his resolution; he would no longer mind any difficulty. He exhorted every one to be thus resolute. After we have recommended an affair to God, we must hold fast to what we have resolved upon, looking upon everything contrary as a temptation, and fully confiding that we shall not displease God, nor have to render him an account for so doing; for we might tell him in truth: 'I have recommended this affair to Thee, I have taken the advice of others; I could not do more to know Thy will.' The example of Pope Clement is a proof of what I have said. A very important affair was laid before him, in which a whole kingdom was concerned. Many a courier was sent, but a whole year elapsed before he would come to a decision. Meanwhile he recommended the matter to God and consulted and deliberated upon it with men of great discretion and experience. At last he gave his decision. Soon after he dreamed that he saw

Christ with an angry countenance, reproaching him and threatening to punish him severely for what he had done. On awakening he felt greatly alarmed. He related his dream to Cardinal Toledo who, after having reflected upon the matter before God, answered the Pope that he should not be alarmed at all, considering his dream as a delusion of the devil. After having recommended the affair to God and consulted others upon it, he had no reason to be frightened. The Pope then felt quite easy.

A priest, remarking one day to St. Vincent de Paul that a certain affair might have bad consequences, he replied: "We ought not to look so much to the consequences as to whether the matter is in accordance with the doctrine and example of the Lord." St. Francis de Sales expresses the same opinion when he says: "After having consulted prudent and discreet men and come to a final decision, we must reject every thought that could make us doubt its propriety. All we have to do is to carry into effect what we have decided upon after calm and mature deliberation. No difficulties whatever must intimidate and prevent us from so doing. Instead of reflecting upon the difficulties which we may meet, we should rather think that we might have met with greater ones, had we come to another decision. This is always a solid reflection; for, as we cannot see into the future, we know not whether God has prepared for us consolation, affliction, peace, trouble, or temptation. Everything depends on our decision; if it be based on wise and solid principles, wise and good will be its execution. Should it prove a failure, it will not be our fault." He himself, after having maturely reflected upon a thing, especially if it concerned the greater glory of God and

the salvation of souls, was most resolute, braving all dangers and difficulties, no matter how great they were. When there was question in the Council of the Duke of Chablais of removing all Calvinistic preachers and re-establishing the Catholic religion, he managed so as to have all heresies completely banished from the Province. For this end, he laid before the Council, first political reasons, then he cast a glance upon the religious side of the question, saying that, "when the honor and glory of God were concerned, something should be left to Providence. Had Constantine, Theodosius, and other princes, acted merely as politicians, and consulted human prudence only, heathenism, infidelity, and heresy would still be prevailing. God supports and confirms on their thrones those potentates who endeavor to make their subjects, subjects of the Most High. He pours forth his benedictions upon the dominions of those princes who, by their zealous efforts, re-establish true religion and the fear of the Lord."

4. *Proceed with circumspection.*—In order to treat every one right, observe and consider his manner of acting, his natural disposition and character, and then treat him accordingly, either with courtesy and affability, with earnestness, with frankness, or with reserve. If one is of a choleric disposition, if he speaks fast and likes to speak, be affable and sociable with him, not appearing grave, phlegmatic, or melancholy. If any one is reserved and slow and earnest in his conversation, act with him in the same manner, because he will like this method of acting. It is to be observed that, if one of a choleric disposition has to deal with another of the same character, and if both have not altogether the same spirit, they will

easily misunderstand each other in their conversation. If one knows that he is of a choleric disposition, he should consider in advance all the details of his conversation with others, in order to enter upon it well prepared, being firmly determined to suffer rather than to allow himself to be put out of humor by another, especially if he knows him to be of a delicate constitution. Should he, however, have to treat with a phlegmatic or melancholy character, he will not be in so great a danger to exasperate him by inconsiderate conversation. Be discreet in all your conversations, especially in mediations of peace and in spiritual conferences, as you must expect that, whatever you say, may possibly go before the public.

In public meetings be never too forward to speak ; above all, be discreet and amiable, especially when affairs are taken into consideration. Be calm and attentive in listening to what others say and endeavor not only to understand the meaning of their words, but also their inclination and intention, in order to see whether it be better to answer or to be silent. In controversies expose your reasons both for and against, in order not to seem to be attached too obstinately to your own opinion, and above all endeavor that no one may feel hurt or exasperated by what you say. If the points in dispute are of such a nature as to oblige you to speak, express your opinion in a most calm and modest manner. Let not your conversation be arranged according to leisure and ease, but according to the advantage and disposition of him with whom you have to treat, in order that he may arrive where God wishes to lead him. Let your answers to questions be short, but very considerate ; exhortations to piety, on the contrary, must be more lengthy, sweet, and calculated to touch the heart to the quick.

In all your business transactions, especially with your equals or inferiors, speak little in proportion to their dignity and authority : listen willingly to whatever they say until they have finished speaking, after which give your answer to everything, and then take leave ; should they recommence to say something still, answer as briefly as possible. Be short but obliging in taking leave.

5. *Avoid duplicity in dealing with others.*—Be simple with the cunning, the deceitful and the malicious. After St. Vincent de Paul had accepted a Mission-house in a certain province, the inhabitants of which were said to be very cunning and malicious people, he gave the following advice to the Superior of the house : “ You are about to set out for a province the people of which are said to be very cunning. If this is true you cannot gain them over to God by any better means than that of great simplicity of heart ; for the principles of the Gospel are diametrically opposed to the principles of the world. As you are going to make Jesus Christ known in those regions you must act up to his spirit, which is a straightforward and candid one.”

When after some time he had to send another Superior to the same mission he purposely chose a Father of great candor and simplicity, being fully persuaded that simplicity and candor are the best weapons to overcome hypocrisy and the prudence of the flesh. He cherished the greatest affection for the candid and simple of heart.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

IN WHAT SPIRIT WE SHOULD TRANSACT TEMPORAL AFFAIRS.

“Those who often eat honey, or other sweet things,” says St. Francis de Sales, “find sour ones sourer and bitter ones more bitter and easily become disgusted with them. The same happens to a soul that frequently applies to spiritual exercises in which it experiences heavenly consolations. It loathes exterior occupation ; it returns to them with great reluctance, and often grows impatient.” This not unfrequently happens also to those who have charge of others. But a pastor must firmly believe that he pleases God not only by taking care of the spiritual welfare of his subjects, but also by attending properly to the temporal affairs of his parish ; for, according to St. Francis de Sales, true piety consists in discharging, for God’s sake, the duties of our state with promptitude and charity of spirit. As God’s power and wisdom appear equally great and admirable in little plants and insects as well as in the majestic cedars of Lebanon or in the sun, in the moon and in the stars, so, in like manner, is his will not less great or less adorable and amiable when it commands the care of temporal affairs than when it enjoins that of the spiritual welfare of others. Hence St. Ignatius was right in saying that as much devotion and fervor should be displayed in the one as in the other, because in either we should seek nothing but God’s holy will and good pleasure. Very

consoling is what we read on this subject in the life and revelations of St. Gertrude. As this saint prayed one day for a person who found great difficulty in a work which had been enjoined on her, our Lord instructed her thus: "If any one desires, for love of me, to undertake any painful work, by which he fears to be hindered from his devotions and yet prefers the accomplishment of my will to his devotions, I will so esteem the purity of his intention as to consider it as if it had really been carried into effect; and even if he never commences what he desires to undertake, he will not fail to obtain the same reward from me as if he had accomplished his intention." (Chapt. 72.) Another time, when the convent was much burdened by a heavy debt, the saint prayed to God with more devotion than usual that the convent procurators might be able to pay their debts. Our Lord replied tenderly: "What advantage shall I gain if I assist them in this?" The saint replied: "They will then be able to be more fervent and recollected in their spiritual duties." "And what advantage will this be to me," continued our Lord, "since I have no need of your goods, and it is all the same to me whether you employ yourselves in bodily or in mental exercises, provided you do so for love of me? If I took pleasure only in spiritual exercises, I would have so reformed human nature after its fall, that it would no longer have needed food, or clothing, or any of the other necessities of life, which are now acquired with so much labor. And as a great emperor is pleased not merely with bringing up noble ladies in the court of the empress, but also brings up in his own court nobles, captains and soldiers, who are employed in different ways, that they may serve him when occasion

presents itself, so also I take pleasure, not only in the interior lights of contemplation, but also in the different exterior affairs and occupations of the children of men, with whom I love to dwell when they labor for love of me, and for my glory, because in these occupations they are much exercised in charity, patience, humility and other virtues."

After this the saint beheld the person who had the principal charge of the temporal affairs of the monastery as if he were resting on the left hand of the Lord, and it appeared to her that he often rose with great pain, and offered him a piece of gold enriched with a precious stone. Our Lord then said to her: "Know that if I lessened the troubles of him for whom you pray, I should be deprived of these precious stones which are so acceptable to me, and the recompense which awaits him would also be less; for he who, without suffering any adversity, refers all his actions to God according to his adorable will, would only be able to offer me with his right hand this piece of gold; but he who is constantly suffering and still conforms himself to the decrees of divine Providence, offers me gold enriched with very rare and precious stones."

Nevertheless, the saint still continued to pray that the convent procurator might be relieved from his difficulties. But our Lord said to her: "Why does it seem hard to you that any one should suffer these inconveniences for love of me, since I am the one true friend whose faithfulness never changes? For when any one is deprived of all human help and consolation and is driven to the last extremity, those who have formally received kindness from him are sorry for his misfortunes, and yet

their sorrow is often fruitless and can afford no assistance to their friend. But I am the only true friend who, in such dire necessity, will console the afflicted with the merit and glory of all the good works they have practised during their whole life, whether by thoughts, words, or actions ; and these shall appear scattered over my vestments like roses and lilies ; while the delightful vision shall revive in the soul its hopes of eternal life, to which it beholds itself invited in recompense for its good works. Then the soul disposes itself in holy contentment to depart from its mortal body and to enter eternal felicity, so that amidst its joys it may say : “Behold, the smell of my beloved is as the smell of a fertile field.” (Gen. 27.) For even as the body is composed of many members united together, so also the soul consists of affections, such as fear, grief, joy, love, hope, anger, modesty ; in the exercise of each of which the more a man works for my glory, the more he will find in me that incomprehensible and ineffable joy and that secure delight which will prepare him for eternal happiness. For in the resurrection, when the body will be raised incorruptible, each of its members will receive a special recompense for the labors and actions which it has performed in my name and for love of me. But the soul will receive an incomparably greater reward for all the holy affections which it has entertained for love of me, for its compunction, and even for having animated the body for my service.” Once again, as the saint prayed that the faithful procurator might receive the full reward of his troublesome labors for the temporal good of the community, our Lord said to her : “His body which is wearied by so many labors for me, is like a treasure-house, in which I place

as many pieces of silver as his limbs make movements to fulfil the duties with which he is charged ; and his heart is like an ark in which I place in reserve as many pieces of gold as he has had thoughts of providing carefully for love of me, for those persons who are under his care." Then the saint exclaimed in surprise : "It seems to me, O Lord, that this man is not so perfect as to undertake all that he does purely for thy glory ; for I believe he also thinks of the temporal profit which he obtains thereby, and consequently of his bodily convenience. How, then, canst Thou, my God, find such pleasure as Thou sayest, in his heart and in his body ?" Our Lord condescended to reply thus : "It is because his will is so entirely submitted to mine that I am always the principal cause of his actions ; and for this reason he will merit an inestimable recompense for all his thoughts, his words, and his works. If he applies himself to each action with a still greater purity of intention, he will increase his merit, even as gold exceeds silver in value ; and if he endeavors to refer all his thoughts and anxieties to me with a yet purer intention, they will become as much more excellent as refined gold is in comparison to that which is alloyed with a baser metal." (Chapt. 57.)

Not less consoling and encouraging are the instructions of St. Francis de Sales on this subject. When asked whether one should not refuse or try to be freed from certain offices which cannot be exercised without many difficulties, distractions and solitudes, he answered : "It is a wrong opinion even of good and pious souls to imagine that it is impossible for them to preserve peace of heart and recollection of mind amidst pressing occupations. Where are there greater and more frequent

motions than on the sea? Are ships ever free from being tossed about? And yet every passenger sleeps well, and the compass is always pointing to the North. Whoever seeks nothing but God in all his actions and refers them all to God's greater glory, will be content and happy everywhere, even in the most violent troubles and storms, because even in them he sees the Lord's will which permits and sends them. It is thus that he reaches his last end, to which all his desires are directed, and which consists in honoring God in all things and under all circumstances. It appears strange to me to hear so many of those who have consecrated themselves to the service of God in a holy state, often complain when they are obliged to enter upon laborious offices, and call the duties thereof so many sources of distraction. Truly distracting occupations are those only which separate us from God. Now it is sin alone that separates us from him. Every lawful occupation, far from separating us from God, only unites us to him more intimately. We must belong to God even in the bustle of the most pressing worldly affairs. How can we exhibit ourselves as better and more faithful servants of the Lord than by undergoing for his sake, great hardships and troublesome labors? Is solitude not just as full of storms as the world of noise and cares? We must nowhere be discouraged, for the Lord is ready to assist all who hope in him, and pray to him with humility for his fatherly assistance. Take care that your cares may not turn into anxiety, perplexity and disquietude; and no matter how much your ship may be tossed about by the waves and storms of perplexing occupations, always look up to heaven and say to the Lord: 'My Lord and My God, for Thy sake I row on

through these stormy waves. Be Thou my guide and my pilot !' And then also console yourself with the thought that, when you arrive at the harbor, the joy and happiness which await you there, will be more than an ample reward for all the troubles and hardships which you had to undergo to reach it. Now every storm drives us nearer and nearer, provided our hearts be sincere, our intentions constantly directed to God, and our whole confidence placed in him. Should now and then the violence of the storm derange our stomach a little, and make us, for some moments, suffer somewhat from vertigo, let us not be uneasy, but rather take new courage to pursue our work the more manfully. Let us then not be cast down on account of anxieties, perplexities and vexations that may befall us in the multiplicity of domestic affairs ; for thus we shall be exercised in those very virtues which our Lord Jesus Christ has recommended to us. Believe me, true virtue lives and grows just as little in a heart never suffering any disturbance as good fish in stagnant waters. Whoever abandons occupations, to which God calls him, that by means of prayer, solitude, reading, silence, interior recollection and meditation, he may unite himself more closely to the Lord, instead of uniting himself more closely to him, he will only unite himself more closely to his self-love. It is altogether a different thing to be separated from God and to be deprived of sensible devotion and the sweet consolation of the presence of God. In the multiplicity of affairs and unavoidable occupations and troubles, which are inseparable from the direction of a community, we cannot, it is true, always enjoy these sweet consolations ; yet, if we suffer the privation of them for the love of God and refer all our troubles to him, instead of losing we do but

gain. We lose what is sweet, but we gain what is strong. God who, according to the words of the prophet, is always near those who are in tribulation, will never abandon one who works for the glory of his holy name. Let us rest assured that if obedience obliges us to take care of many things, the Lord will not fail to assist us in doing our work, if we do not fail to co-operate with him in doing his work. Now his work is the sanctification of our soul. This is our field. Let us work on it with humility, simplicity and confidence, and unavoidable distractions will never hurt us. That peace which is sought in avoiding labors which serve for the greater glory of God, is but false rest. God is accustomed to disturb the peace of these souls by persecutions and tribulations, as was experienced by the good brother Leonicius, who was the procurator of the convent. God often visited him with the sweetest consolations even in the midst of hard labors, but withdrew them after his Superior had yielded to his earnest request to retire into his cell, there to give himself up to a greater interior recollection and contemplation.

“Something similar happened to a holy religious of the Order of St. Francis. After he had spent many years very profitably in the conversion of Indians, he at last desired very much to retire from the world, in order to prepare himself to die well. For this end he retired into a monastery of his own Order in Spain, where he lived in a very austere recollection. As often, however, as he went to prayer he seemed to see Jesus Christ crucified complaining tenderly to him: “Why hast thou thus left me upon the cross, whilst thou seekest thy own repose and ease?” The good religious was so touched with this vis-

ion that he returned again to the harvest which he had left and served God therein again for a very long time.

“We ought to be persuaded that God hates the peace of those whom he has called to fight his battles. He is not less the God of hosts and battles than the God of peace. He called the Order into existence for a twofold end. As he blesses the means to reach the principal end, so he likewise blesses the means to reach the secondary end, namely : to contribute towards the salvation of others and thereby towards our own at the same time. Hence religious do so much good ; they enjoy what is called the grace of vocation. As the Lord gives particular graces to the members of contemplative Orders to lead a life of recollection and strict enclosure, to sing the divine office and to keep certain fasts and to undergo such other austerities as are peculiar to them, so, in like manner, he gives grace to the members of Orders of a mixed life to acquit themselves well of their duties and charities towards their neighbor, because it is for this that they are called, as others are to solitude and retirement. We ought then always remember well that our perfection consists in acquitting ourselves well of the duties of our state. The spirit of prayer and solitude ought to be a very laudable thing amongst us ; but such a spirit of prayer and retirement as would induce us to withdraw from assisting souls and from other duties of charity would be a kind of temptation and illusion of the devil, who is wont to transform himself into an angel of light to deceive us, in order to make us withdraw from our vocation under the pretext of laboring for our own advancement, and of avoiding the dangers met with in the exercise of the ministry or charity.”

We must give ourselves up to prayer according to the

spirit of our vocation, that is, with the intention of obtaining new lights and new strength in the performance of our duties. The better we shall find ourselves disposed for these employments when we leave our prayer, the more we may be sure of having made a good prayer ; and the more the love of God has been enkindled in it, the more zeal and fervor ought we to display on leaving it to gain souls to God or to procure the glory of God in the faithful discharge of the duties of our state.

Let us then have an unbounded confidence in the grace of the Order to which we belong, always remaining easy in the employments that God and obedience have given us. Let us be very careful not to listen to our own inclinations in the choice either of place or employments in which we are to be put. Let us renounce entirely our own will and abandon ourselves to that of God, and suffer ourselves to be led to him by the way of obedience. Nowhere shall we be in greater security for our salvation and the progress in perfection than where God has been pleased to put us.

Once Blessed Margaret Alacoque had to perform a certain office which prevented her from being present at the meditation of the community. This made her a little uneasy, but our Lord blamed her for it, saying: " Know that the prayer of humble submission and self-renunciation is more pleasing to me, than meditation and every other kind of contemplation, no matter how holy it may appear." " No one," says St. Frances de Chantal of St. Francis de Sales, " could ever be more determined, more generous, and more courageous than this saint when heavy burdens were to be carried, labors to be performed, and designs inspired by God, to be executed. Nothing

could dishearten him ; ‘for,’ said he, ‘we must never abandon an affair, with which the Lord has intrusted us, but should courageously overcome all difficulties.’ In one of his letters he writes of pressing occupations as follows : ‘All these things are, it is true, different in themselves, but the intention, with which they ought to be performed, must be one and the same. Love alone gives true value to all our good works and exercises. Our divine Saviour is the well-beloved of his heavenly Father at the river Jordan where he humbled himself ; on Mount Thabor where he was glorified ; and on Mount Calvary where he was crucified, because, in all these circumstances, he honored his Father with the same dispositions of heart, with the same spirit of submission and love. In imitation of his example we, too, must endeavor to acquire solid love which prompts us to seek, in all things, nothing but God’s good pleasure. This alone will render our works beautiful and perfect, no matter how trifling they may appear.’ He himself practised this lesson to perfection. For several years previous to his death, he could not apply himself at all to meditation on account of so many almost overwhelming occupations. Once when I asked him whether he had made it, he answered, ‘no ; but what I did was just as good.’ The fact was that he was in constant union with God, and he used to say ‘that in this life we must pray by good works also.’ Thus his life may be said to have been a continual prayer. He loved God’s will in one thing as much as in another. Hence in the latter years of his life, the purity of his intention became so great that in all things he could not wish for, love or see anything else than God alone. Being quite absorbed in God he would say : ‘Nothing in this world

could give me any real satisfaction except God alone.' Thus he lived, indeed, not he himself, but Christ in him."

St. Vincent de Paul speaks in the same manner. "Now let us," he writes to a Superior, "pass from the spiritual to the temporal. A Superior must take care of both. As his subjects consist of body and soul, he must provide for either, imitating God who, besides his so-called action *ad intra*—the generation of his Son and the procession of the Holy Ghost—created also *ad extra*, as it is called by theologians, the world, sustains it, and makes new fruits grow every year. His most adorable Providence extends to all things, so much so that, without his knowledge and will, not even the leaf of a tree falls to the ground, that he has counted the hairs of our head and that he feeds even the vilest worms of the earth. This consideration is sufficient to convince you, that you must take care not only of what is of great importance, namely, the spiritual, but as a Superior who has, in some manner, to imitate God's Omnipotence, you must also take care of the temporal, even in the most trifling things, never believing that this is below your dignity. At first, when the Son of God sent out his disciples, he told them not to take any money with them; but after they had become more numerous, he ordered that every division should have their procurator, who should not only provide for the wants of the poor, but principally for those of his own disciples; nay, what is still more remarkable, he even permitted women to follow them, that they might provide for their necessities. If the Gospel says, we should not be solicitous for to-morrow (Matt. vi, 34), it intends only to warn us against too great anxiety for the temporal, but not to intimate that we should no longer labor for

food and raiment, as otherwise it would also forbid to sow."

"Disgust and reluctance, fretfulness, discontent and whatever temptations occur in this sort of occupation," says St. Francis de Sales, "must be resisted and repelled by the consideration that God's will is equally amiable in all things, and that, like the guardian angels who are equally happy, no matter whether they have to guard good or bad men, Catholics or heretics, Jews or infidels, you, too, must, in imitation of those spirits, whose happiness consists in doing God's will, seek and find, in all your affairs, no other than this angelic happiness and satisfaction. Often pray to your meek Jesus, that he may keep you meek, in order that, as St. Francis de Sales says, you may not only resemble a gentle dove flying up to the sky when you elevate your soul towards heaven in prayer, but may also be like it when sitting in its nest, that is to say, in your conversations and dealings with your subjects. To be obliged to attend to a multiplicity of affairs is, indeed, a constant martyrdom; much patience is required for it, which God, however, will not fail to grant to you, provided you ask it of him most earnestly, and exert yourself to practise it faithfully. You must prepare yourself for it every morning by a special meditation, making a firm resolution to practise this virtue of patience throughout the whole day and renewing it as often as you forget yourself. Let no opportunity pass for showing your patient charity to every one. Moreover, do not imagine that the good success of your affairs depends on your own efforts and care, but rather on God's assistance and blessing alone. Therefore trust in him, believing that he will do your work,

provided you do calmly your own part. I say *calmly*; for too great anxiety proves injurious, not only to our heart, but also to the good success of our affairs, and causes much uneasiness. When we were little children, how carefully did we collect bricks, small pieces of wood and the like for building little houses, and how did we not grieve, when some one destroyed them; but now we laugh at these childish amusements. When once admitted into heaven we shall think the same, seeing that all that which gave us so much trouble and uneasiness was nothing but child's play. By this I do not mean to say that we should devote no time or attention to these plays and amusements of children, for God gave them to us in the world, as pastimes, but we should not suffer them to cause us unnecessary trouble and uneasiness. Let us not be disturbed if some one should upset our little houses, or frustrate our insignificant schemes; for, in the hour of death, they will be of no use. Let us be persuaded that our devotion and piety will be so much the better and the more solid, the less we live according to our own liking, and the less our own choice is found in all our actions."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SPIRIT OF CHARITY—FAULTS CONTRARY TO IT.

In the time before Christ, there was prevailing the pedagogic spirit of the schools of philosophy, the secret spirit of the old sanctuaries of Egypt, making of its wisdom a strict monopoly.

There was also the Jewish spirit, a harsh, absolute, and repressive spirit, bestowing upon justice and truth their sanction in the world, arming itself with the thunders of heaven, and violently separating itself from all dissenters and assuming to itself the vengeance of God in their regard.

There were more idolaters killed than converted by the zeal of the prophet Elias ; 850 magicians and false prophets were slain, and a still greater number perished during the three years' famine ; his zeal for justice and revenge to destroy the impious was greater than that of his charity to convert them. The latter was reserved to Jesus Christ, and his apostles and all his faithful servants. Jesus came to make us acquainted with his spirit. He taught us on different occasions what his spirit is.

St. Luke informs us that our divine Saviour one day went to expose himself to the insults which he saw would be offered to him on his way from Capharnaum to Jerusalem, where he wished to assist at the Feast of Tabernacles. Jews from every land filled the Holy City. The illuminations of the Acropolis of Sion, the choirs, the sacred dances, the cabins of foliage raised upon the terraced

roofs, along the streets, and in the public squares, recalled the forty years passed by the Hebrews under tents in the desert. From all parts the faithful, with palm branches in their hands, flocked to thank God for the harvest just gathered in, and to offer sacrifice for the salvation of their families and for the redemption of the nation. The shortest road to reach the Holy City was to cross the plain of Samaria. But the Samaritans, a half-pagan tribe, partly composed of foreign colonies, were enemies of the Jews. Their animosity had increased in intensity because, under the government of Coponius, a troop of Samaritans unexpectedly invaded Jerusalem during the Feast of the Passover. They profaned the sanctuary by casting into it human bones to prevent the celebration of the Jewish festival.

The Lord, ever mindful of the law, sent two of his disciples, St. John and St. James, to ask permission to pass through Samaria. But the Samaritans shut their gates against them, and refused to allow Jesus to pass through their province. Then James and John became exceedingly exasperated, and remembering that formerly fifty-two servants of king Ochozias, sent out from Samaria to seize upon the prophet Elias, had been killed by fire from heaven, they said to Jesus: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and destroy them?" (Luke ix, 54.) Jesus severely reproached them and said: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save." (Vers. 55, 56.)

On this occasion our divine Saviour taught us that his spirit is a spirit of charity which embraces all men without exception. In a preceding chapter we have seen

his unfathomable charity for all mankind. He came into this world to communicate this spirit of charity to all his followers.

As true love of ourselves consists in loving ourselves in God and for God, so true love of our neighbor consists in loving him in God and for God. When we recommend a dear friend to any one we usually say : "The kindness you show him I will consider as a favor conferred on myself." In like manner, when our Saviour declared that "the second commandment is like to the first," he wished to give us to understand that the love which we bear him should induce us to love our neighbor also. "If thou lovest me," said Jesus to St. Peter, "feed my sheep" (Jchn xxi, 17); that is to say: If you really love me, you will show your love by taking good care of my sheep. Our Saviour has substituted our neighbor for himself. He wishes us to bestow on our neighbor the charity and gratitude which we owe to God himself. He has transferred to our neighbor all the claims that he has on us and he desires us to pay to our neighbor all that we owe to himself. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. xxv, 40.)

Our dear Lord calls this precept of charity especially *his own* commandment. "This is *my* commandment, that you love one another." He calls it *his* commandment, to teach us that this precept of charity is the foundation of all his heavenly doctrines, the sole object of his coming into this world, the sole aim of all his labors and sufferings. "I have come," he says, "to cast fire upon the earth (the fire of charity), and what will I but that it be enkindled." (Luke xii. 49.)

Not satisfied with calling the precept of charity his own commandment, our dear Saviour calls it also a *new* commandment. "I give you," he says, "a new commandment." (John xiii, 34.) But how is it a new commandment? Is not the precept of charity as old as the world? True; the precept of charity, in general, and in a certain sense, is as ancient as the world. The law of charity is a law of nature. It is a law engraven on the heart of every man, that he must act towards others as he would wish that they should act towards him. But this law of nature was more or less obscured by the passions of men. Hence Christian charity, or that kind of charity which Jesus Christ commands, is a new commandment. It is new as to the spirit and perfection with which it is to be observed. We are to love one another as Jesus Christ has loved us. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." (John xiii, 34.) I have given you my entire self, all that I am and all that I have. I am now going to sacrifice my life on the cross for you and all men. I wish you to follow my example and to love one another with true, with divine, that is, with a *universal* love. My love is not limited by sympathies and aversions, by natural inclinations and antipathies, by ingratitude and hatred. My heart embraces all mankind. As I am infinite goodness itself, it is my pleasure to do good to every man who is my image, my subject, my work, and my child. There is no one whom this love of mine does not overshadow; there is no one to whom I have not given all that is necessary for his temporal welfare; no one whom I have not enlightened by my inspirations, assisted by my grace. I have given to every

one an angel to watch over him. I desire the salvation of all. I have given to each one the means of salvation. I have given to each one the sacraments of my Church. I have created each one for heaven. I gave you an example of this charity in the parable of the good Samaritan. The Samaritan did not ask the wounded man what country he was from—whether he was a Greek or a barbarian. He did not wait for others to perform the duties of charity towards the poor stranger. He did not say: “It is the duty of priests and Levites to take care of this man; I can do nothing for him.” He did not offer his ignorance of medicine as an excuse for abandoning the wounded man. He did not excuse himself on account of the danger he would incur of falling into the hands of the robbers if he delayed. He did not spare his wine and oil. He placed the sick man on his horse, and walked himself. He took the wounded man to an inn and defrayed all his expenses there. It is thus you must love all men without exception. You must exclude no one from your love. You must do good to the most wretched and forsaken.

“If you love one another,” says Jesus, “all men will know that you are my disciples, and that I was sent by my heavenly Father.” (John xiii, 35.) “And not for them (the apostles) alone do I pray, but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in me, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.*” (John xvii, 20, 21.)

When St. Pachomius was yet a heathen soldier and noticed the cheerfulness with which the inhabitants of a certain place assisted the soldiers in their distress, he

asked who those persons were who so cheerfully assisted others. He was answered that they were Christians whose religion obliged them to assist every one to the best of their power. This answer made a deep impression upon Pachomius. He felt convinced that a religion which inspired so universal and so disinterested a charity, must be divine, and he immediately became a Christian.

If we wish, then, to comply with the precept of charity, we must behold our neighbor in the heart of Jesus Christ. There we will find our neighbor, and Jesus loves him so much that he died for him. He, therefore, who fixes his eyes upon the heart of Jesus, cannot help loving his neighbor truly. He, on the contrary, who looks at his neighbor out of the heart of Jesus, runs the risk of loving him with neither pure nor constant love. If we love our neighbor in God, our love becomes only the more intense and more perfect. This motive ennobles our affections and transforms them from natural into supernatural, from human into divine, from temporal into eternal. Mere natural friendship does not last long, because its foundation is unsteady. At the first misunderstanding the mere natural cools and dies. But this does not happen in friendship which is founded in God, because its foundation is firm and solid. The bond of divine charity alone can keep our hearts united.

Such is the spirit of charity that must animate all true followers of Christ, but especially every priest of the Lord. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity," says St. Paul, "I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove

mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

We all know what became of the man who went to the marriage feast without having on a wedding garment --the garment of charity. He was cast into the exterior darkness. (Matt. xxii, 11, 12, 13.)

Now the spirit of true, genuine charity must exist especially between the prelates and priests of the country. If the bishops and clergy of the United States are perfectly united, they can, by their noble spirit of self-denial, bid defiance to all the powers of hell, Protestants, free-masons and infidels.

The bishops and their clergy must harmonize like the chords in a well-tuned harp. If only one chord is out of tune, it produces discord ; it destroys the harmony of the others. The strong harmonious chords of the harp are the good priests who have the care of souls, who have to bear the burden and heat of the day. The softer chords are the religious, and the professors in colleges and seminaries, who lead a life of prayer, study and penance.

Each chord has its own tone, its peculiar beauty ; so each priest has his own peculiar talents, his own usefulness. One therefore should not despise the other ; one should not be jealous of the other.

The saints have always believed that the success of their labors for the salvation of souls depended on their union with Christ through the Bishop. Father Coleridge relates in the Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier, that " On landing at Goa, this great Apostle of Japan went to the Bishop and informed him of his mission from the Pope

and the King, showing him his letters and faculties, including that which appointed him Apostolic delegate. At the same time he declared that he had no "desire nor intention of using the extraordinary powers conferred upon him, except so far as it seemed good and advisable to the Bishop himself. This absolute deference to the ordinary ecclesiastical authority was a fixed principle with him during the whole of his missionary career, as it was also uniformly insisted upon by St. Ignatius in Europe. Francis adopted the principle *not* merely out of prudence, but in order that his work might have the blessing of obedience upon it as well as that of perfect union with the representatives of divine authority in the Church." (Vol. I, p. 125.)

How this saint dealt with his own brethren in religion we may judge from a letter written to Father Cipriani. Speaking of the Bishop's Vicar, he says: "If the Vicar does not act as he ought, most certainly he will not be taught by such reproofs from you, especially when they are pressed upon him so imprudently, as has been the case now. . . . Understand that all things are brought about by humility. If you cannot do as much as you wish, do what you can accomplish in quietness and goodness. . . . Good that is done without offence or disturbance, even though in itself no greater than this little line,—is much better and greater than good gained in another way, though it appears ever so much larger so as to be expressed by a line that reaches across the whole page. . . . That speech of yours certainly has a very grand sound. 'What? Can we endure in silence to see injury done to God's glory, and obstacles placed in the way of saving souls.' How then? Do you repair

that injury, or do you heap fresh mischief upon it by the storm and tumult of detestable quarrels? I repeat it, you will never obtain from the Vicar by threats and contentions what you cannot obtain by modesty and humility." (Vol. ii, p. 418.)

In 1885 the official *Osservatore Romano* published a letter of the Pope in reply to a communication from the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, relative to a recent letter written by Cardinal Pitra, Sub-Dean of the Sacred College, in defence of certain journals, which by imprudent and injudicious language, had drawn upon themselves Pontifical reprimand. This grave Papal document openly censures the conduct of those Catholics who set themselves up as judges and criticisers of the Head of the Church and of his government of the Fold of Christ committed to his charge and guidance; as also all those, especially journalists, who rebel against proper episcopal authority. This same official, the *Osservatore Romano*, published also the French text of the letter of the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, of the letter of the Holy Father, and of a second letter from Cardinal Pitra, wherein his Eminence declares his full and entire submission to his Holiness.

The first letter is from the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, to his Holiness Pope Leo XIII, and is as follows:—

"*Most Holy Father*:—During the serious illness, whose danger I have escaped, I believe through the blessing of your Holiness, I have been unable to keep myself informed in regard to Church matters. At the time of my seizure, it seemed to me that the most wise admonitions of your Holiness had restored complete union among Catholic writers, and averted the painful controversies which had previously occurred.

“But as I recover strength in my convalescence, and I am enabled to acquaint myself with what is written in the daily organs, I am grieved to see that that union, so necessary and rendered imperative by the dangers of the day, is not as real and as assured as I had hoped. It appears to me, judging from certain polemics, more or less veiled, that some very regrettable germs of division still remain, and I consider it a filial duty to express to your Holiness my deep sorrow for this. In the present position of the Church, in face of the terrible hostility to which she is exposed, all good Christians, the clergy, the Bishops especially, and the dignitaries of the Church, should group themselves round the sacred person of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and under his inspiration and his guidance, sustain the good fight with persevering fidelity. The evil of disunion always proceeds at bottom, from self-love, and an overweening confidence in one's self, which has not been checked. Through my long episcopal career of forty-four years, through many disturbances and divers events, the thought has more than once occurred to my mind that the Head of the Church should take such a step or avoid such another. But God, by his grace, has always made me understand that I had not received from Jesus Christ the personal assistance that was promised to Peter and to his successors; and experience has proved to me that the Popes under whom I have lived have governed the Church wisely, as their predecessors had done for eighteen centuries.

“My wish is most, Holy Father, that all in these evil times may inspire themselves with those sentiments of respect, of love of the Church, and of personal modesty which the Gospel teaches, and that that intimate union

of the members with the Head may uphold your holy authority, and afford you the consolation to which your Holiness is so justly entitled.

“Deign to accept, most Holy Father, the profound respect and entire devotion of the most humble and most obedient servant and son,

“J. HIPP. CARD. GUIBERT,
“Archbishop of Paris.

“*Paris, June 4, 1885.*”

To this his Holiness addressed the following weighty reply:—

“LEO PP., XIII.

“*Dear Son, Health and Apostolic Benediction:—*Your letter, filled with sentiments of the most filial affection and the sincerest devotion to ourselves, brought gentle consolation to our heart, saddened by a recent and a weighty grief. You can understand how nothing could be more deeply painful to us than to see disturbed the spirit of harmony among Catholics, or to see shaken the calm confidence, the trustful and submissive resignation which is due from sons to the Father by whom they are ruled. And thus, at the mere appearance of the first symptoms of the evil, we cannot but be greatly concerned, and seek to guard against such an evil without delay. And, therefore, the recent publication of a letter from the most unexpected quarter, and which you have deplored as much as ourselves, the sensation which it has evoked, and the comments to which it has given rise, have decided us to break silence on a subject painful indeed, but which is none the less opportune, both for France and for other countries.

“Observing certain indications, it is not difficult to see that there are among Catholics (perhaps because of the unhappy state of the times) some who are not content with the part of submission which belongs to them in the Church, think they may take a part in its government. At any rate, they imagine that they are allowed to examine and judge according to their own views, the acts of the authorities. That would be a serious state of disorder if it could prevail in the Church of God, where by the express will of its Divine Founder, two distinct orders are established in the plainest way—the teaching Church, and the Church taught, the pastors and the flock, and among the pastors, one of them who is for all the supreme Head and Pastor. To the pastors alone has been given the full power of teaching, judging, directing; on the faithful has been imposed the duty of following these teachings, of submitting with docility to these judgments, of letting themselves be governed, corrected, and led to salvation. Accordingly, it is a matter of absolute necessity that the faithful laity should submit themselves with heart and mind to their own pastors, and these with them to the supreme Head and Pastor. On this subordination and obedience depend the order and life of the Church. They are the indispensable condition of doing right, and arriving happily in port. If, on the contrary, the laity attribute authority to themselves, if they claim to make themselves judges and doctors; if inferiors prefer to try to make prevail, in the government of the universal Church, a direction different from that of the supreme authority, they are practically overturning order, bringing confusion into a great number of minds, and departing from the right way.

“ And it is not necessary, in order to fail in so sacred a duty, to offer an open opposition, either to the Bishops or to the Head of the Church ; indirect opposition is enough ; and it is the more dangerous, the more it is sought to veil it by the appearance of the contrary. A man fails also in that sacred duty if, while showing himself zealous for the power and prerogatives of the Supreme Pontiff, he does not respect the Bishops who are in communion with him, or does not hold their authority in due account, or interprets unfavorably their acts and intention before any decision of the Apostolic See. It is also a proof of insincere submission, to establish an opposition between Sovereign Pontiff and Sovereign Pontiff. Those who in the case of two different decisions, reject the present one, and hold to the past one, give no proof of obedience to the authority which has the right and duty of directing them, and, in some respects resembles those who, after condemnation, would appeal from it to the next Council, or to a better informed Pope.

The right opinion on this point, then, is that in the general government of the Church, outside of the essential duties of the Apostolic Ministry, which is imposed upon all Pontiffs, each of them is free to follow the rule of conduct which he judges best for the times and the other circumstances of the case. In that he is the sole judge, having on this point not only special lights, but also the knowledge of the situation, and of the general needs of the Catholic Church, according to which it is fitting that his Apostolic solicitude should be regulated. His duty is to care for the good of the Universal Church, with which is co-ordinated the good of its various parts, and all those who are placed under this co-ordination must

second the action of the supreme director and assist his plans, and as the Church is one, and its Head is one, so its government is likewise one, and to that all must conform themselves.

“The result for Catholics of forgetfulness of these principles is a diminution of respect, veneration, and confidence towards him who has been given to them as head. The bonds of love and obedience which should unite the faithful to their pastors, and the faithful as well as their pastors to the Supreme Pastor, are thus weakened. And yet on these bonds principally depend the preservation and the salvation of all.

“By forgetting and no longer observing these principles, a broad road is open for dissensions and discords among Catholics, to the great detriment of the union which is the distinctive mark of the faithful of Jesus Christ. At all times, but particularly at present, on account of the combination of so many hostile powers, this union ought to be the supreme and universal interest, in presence of which every feeling of personal liking or private advantage ought to disappear.

“Such a duty, while incumbent upon all without exception, is most strictly so on journalists, who, if they were not animated with the spirit of docility and submission so necessary to every Catholic, would help to extend and greatly aggravate the evils we deplore. Their obligation in all that touches religious interests and the action of the Church in society, is therefore to submit themselves fully with heart and mind, like all the other faithful, to their own Bishops and the Roman Pontiff, to follow and reproduce their teachings, to second heartily their motions, to respect their intentions, and to make them respected.

Writers who should act otherwise in order to subserve the views and interests of those whose spirit and tendencies we have blamed in this letter, would be false to their noble mission, and would as rashly flatter themselves thus to serve the interests and the cause of the Church as those who should seek to attenuate and diminish its Catholic truth, or work too timidly in its support.

“We have been led to speak to you on these subjects, dear son, not only by the timeliness that they may have for France, but still more by the knowledge we have of your sentiments, and the conduct you have been able to maintain, in the most difficult times and conditions.

“Ever firm and courageous in defending the religious interests and sacred rights of the Church, you have once more, on a recent occasion, manfully upheld and publicly defended them with your luminous and powerful utterances. But to this firmness you have always known how to add the calm and unruffled demeanor befitting the cause you defend, and a passionless mind, full of submission to the guidance of the Apostolic See, and wholly devoted to ourself. It is a pleasure to us, therefore, to be able to give a fresh token of our satisfaction and good will, regretting only the news that your health is not such as we would fervently wish it. We ceaselessly and fervently pray to heaven that it may be completely restored and long preserved to you.—And in pledge of the divine favors, which we call down on you in abundance, we give with our whole heart—to you, our dear son, to your clergy and to all your people—our Apostolic Benediction.

“Given in Rome at St. Peter’s, June 17, 1885, and in the eighth year of our Pontificate.

“Leo PP. XIII.”

The third letter is from his eminence Cardinal Pitra, O. S. B., Bishop of Porto and Santa Rufina, Subdean of the Sacred College. It is addressed to his Holiness and is as follows:—

“*Most Holy Father*:—Prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, I remain bowed under your hand, before the grief of the Vicar of Christ. This sorrow is so great that I cannot think of what concerns myself, unless to protest before God that in the bottom of my heart I can only find the most entire submission to the reproaches, the admonitions, to every word in your letter to his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris.

“I deplore that which your Holiness deplores, I desire that which your Holiness desires, I condemn that which your Holiness condemns.

“I venture to thank your Holiness for having deigned to express one of my most ardent feelings of repulsion at the comments which have calumniated my intentions. Among these the most unbearable, the one I most emphatically deny, is that attributing to me a feeling of hostility to your sacred self, a spirit of opposition which my life has protested against for seven years. In the unbroken isolation, and the uninterrupted secluded habits of my life, I have had no party but the Holy Roman Church, no other Father but her head, no other object than to serve both to the full extent of my powers, no other interest but to live and to die for God alone.

“*Most Holy Father*—I feel myself powerless better to express my submission to all the commands and all the wishes of your Holiness, who will deign to overlook what has not wholly depended on me, and which I hope has not been able to blot out all the proofs of devotion I

have striven to give, and which, with God's help, I will always strive to give without stint.

"Let not your Holiness refuse me a paternal benediction to support me in this grief, and allow me to lay at the feet of your Holiness this humble expression of the most profound and filial veneration.

"Of your Holiness, the most respectful, obedient, and devoted servant and son,

"J. B. CARD. PITRA,

"Bishop of Porto and Santo Rufina.

"*St. Calixtus*, June 20, 1885."

In his Encyclical Letter of Feb. 8th, 1884, Pope Leo XIII says to all priests: "Let the authority of their Bishops be sacred to the priests; let the latter be convinced that their ministry will not be holy, nor profitable, nor respected, if it be not exercised under the guidance of their Bishop.

"If any one is compelled to renounce his own private opinion in order that union may be preserved, let him renounce it cheerfully for the sake of the common good. The prominent laymen also, those devoted to our common Mother the Church, and who are able to render useful service to the Catholic religion by their word and by their pen, must multiply their efforts in the defence of the Church.

"Catholic writers must spare no effort to preserve this harmony in all things; let them prefer that which is of general utility to their own private interests. Let them favor common action; let them willingly submit to those "whom the Holy Ghost has set as Bishops to rule over the Church of God;" let them respect their authority and never undertake anything against the will of those they

should look on as their leaders in the battle for Catholic interests.

“To obtain these results, it is an absolute necessity that wills should be in harmony, and the action unanimous. There is certainly nothing more wished for by our adversaries than dissensions among Catholics, who should avoid nothing with greater care than any disagreement, mindful of the divine words : “Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate.”

“Be subject to your bishop,” says St. Jerome, “and cherish him as the father of your soul.” “Obey your bishop as Jesus Christ obeyed his Father,” says St. Ignatius, the martyr ; “for it is a dreadful thing to oppose such.”

“Everywhere,” says Cardinal Manning, “we meet with whisperers, murmurers, critics, censors, and carpers who spare nobody, and least of all those whom they should most respect, if not for what they are, at least for the office they bear. Such minds invoke their own Nemesis. No priests are so carped at as they who carp at their brethren. No priests are so turned into ridicule as those who ridicule Superiors. Carping in a priest betrays the absence of the gift of piety.” (The Eternal Priesthood, Chapt. XVI.)

Never consider your bishop as a cold, indifferent administrator, imprudent censor and rash judge who cannot listen to both sides of the question ; consider him rather as your best friend and affectionate father, especially in the hour of trial. In every critical trouble have recourse to him. Explain to him everything plainly, minutely and sincerely. Give him your reasons for and against. Make him acquainted with your own com-

plaints and with those of your opponents. Tell him what you can reasonably hope for and what you are reasonably afraid of. If possible, do not show to which side you incline most. Your only object must be to let the bishop see the facts of your trouble, in order to enable him to advise you properly. How could he advise you properly, were you to give but one side of the question. In such a case he might be led to decide either in favor of error or injustice. Should he afterwards be better informed he would reverse his judgment and recall it, and disgrace would evidently fall upon him and yourself. In rather delicate affairs let the bishop take the initiative and see to the consequences.

Should your adversaries renew the impeachments and triumph at last, then you will be considered as the chief of all the troubles. "Why must one man," they will say, "be the cause of so much trouble in one parish?" What course of action will you take then? Will you, in spite of the advice of your Superiors, try to prevent your removal from a parish which remains, on your account, in never-ending dissensions! No, surely; then is the time to obey the order: *When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another.* (S. Matt. x.) You will do better elsewhere, and another will do better where you are. What disgrace can there be in following the example of Jesus Christ, of the Apostles, and of so many holy priests?

Do not meddle with a business that does not belong to you. Mind your own business. Superiors possess three advantages in their government, which you do not possess.

1. They have a general view of the public good; 2, They have a knowledge of their own subjects; and, 3,

They have those special graces which God grants to those who hold his place on earth. These three advantages greatly help Superiors to govern their subjects wisely.

The spirit of charity must also exist among priests themselves, especially between the head-priest of a parish and his assistant.

If you are the head parish priest, do not force your assistant priest to come up to all your ideas, or to make him a slave to all your hobbies; show some consideration for his likes and dislikes, throw a veil over his defects, excuse his want of experience. Except in extraordinary cases, it would be unhandsome and uncharitable summarily to report to the Bishop anything you may think blameworthy. The *Dic Ecclesie* should be a last resource. When anger holds the pen, it is no longer ink that flows from it but gall; the feathered quill changes itself into a sword. Never reprove your assistant in public; at Conference-Meetings, and on familiar occasions, be careful not to blacken his character by spreading abroad his acts of indiscretion: ever treat him as you would have him treat you.

A parish priest should leave his assistant a certain freedom, allow him some share of authority and honor, give him an interest in his work, and gradually initiate him into the mysteries of managing a parish. If the zeal of the one often needs the curb, may not that of the other occasionally require the spur?

To clamor for a change of the assistant under pretext of keeping up your own proper influence in the parish, is miserable policy. As long as good is done, it matters not that another is the instrument. It is well for you that you

have an assistant priest who, by his talents and skill in management, has won the confidence of all. You gain so much the more time for prayer, study, and the details of government. A parish priest sometimes wishes to have all the influence in his own hand, and he loses it by thwarting the people in their affections. Another would wish to have a perfect assistant priest in place of one who does fairly well, and his application to the Bishop will gain him an assistant less eligible than the other, or perhaps one more perfect than was really wanted.

If you are called upon to exercise any authority, or superintendence over the clergy of the neighborhood, forget not the saying of St. Bernard: "Impunity is the offspring of remissness, the mother of insolence, the root and stock of audacity, the nurse of lawlessness." Bear in mind, too, the decree of a synod of Constance: "The rural deans, forasmuch as they are in some sense pastors of pastors, and are bound to help others by example, by counsel, by word, and by work, should be men of prudence, of learning, of known integrity, of wide experience, and of self-control." (Direct. Sacerd.)

"Do not be too eager for a parish," said a good priest once to a young clergyman. "He who cannot govern himself is not fit to govern others." "Rex eris, si reges teipsum. Qui se regit, alios rexerit."

"Discretum moderatum et ordinatum te in omnibus exhibeas," says St. Bernard, "quia Deo nunquam placuit aliquid immoderatum, instabile, confusum, inordinatum. Super humilem autem et quietum requiescet Spiritus Domini. Discas tibi ipsi præesse et teipsum regere, non alios; propriam vitam ordina, mores tuos compone, teipsum judica, apud teipsum accusa et condemna, nec im-

punium dimitte excessum. Tibi ipsi esto durus, nunquam aliis."

If you are the assistant priest of a parish, take a pride in seconding the parish priest, in turning all hearts to him, in sparing him the odium of certain measures. Put forward a favorable view of everything in his management that admits of any favorable explanation, and turn your eyes away from glaring faults, which cannot be remedied, and for which the responsibility does not rest upon your shoulders.

Avoid jealousy, and spying out with an evil eye the marks of respect and esteem which may be shown to him; beware of being whimsical, and expecting that everything shall bend to fancies of your own; shun sensitiveness, and imagining at every turn that he is invading your rights. Be sure never to look upon yourself as either infallible or impeccable. Readily own your shortcomings, allow an opinion contrary to your own to carry the day, and deem it no disgrace to say: "I was mistaken, I retract, I apologize."

Never afford the public the laughable and scandalous spectacle of the assistant not being on speaking terms with his parish priest.

If the parish priest disapproves of your intercourse with a particular person or family, yield the point, whether he be right or wrong, if only for the sake of keeping the peace. Study his tastes and habits, and try to act in harmony with them; before taking a journey obtain his consent; above all do not set about any work that concerns the parish without informing him, and receiving his approval.

Be on your guard against giving ear to complaints about

his conduct; be yet more on your guard against countenancing such; and most of all against making any yourself. Ever have a supreme horror of those schisms in miniature, in which a priest will sometimes manage to engage one or two persons of influence in the congregation, two or three of the pew-holders, a lot of devout females, the schoolmaster or schoolmistress, all the dissatisfied people of the neighborhood, and a few of the clergy of the vicinity. (Direct. Sacerd.)

Magnanimity is essentially the spirit of charity.

One day the Apostles saw some disciples driving out devils in the name of Jesus Christ. They looked upon this as a usurpation. Hence they said to our Lord: "Master, we saw a certain man casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." "Hinder him not," answered our Lord, "for he that is not against you is for you." (Luke ix, 49, 50.) Let the parish priest and his assistant be truly humble, if they wish to keep free from the mean and all-embracing vice of jealousy.

Jealousy is always the sign of a weak mind and a selfish heart. It is a vice that we may expect to find among women; but certainly we do not expect to find it among men and least of all among priests.

Now when David returned, after he slew the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing. In our times just as of old, all jealousies are caused by women, or concern them; the confessions of women, compliments paid to preachers by women, invitations to the houses of women, presents given by women. —And the women sang as they played, and they said: Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

Such a one has an immense concourse of penitents, while his fellow-laborer has scarcely a single one.

“Come here to this confessional !” cried a certain reverend gentleman in an angry tone. “Why do you all crowd around that confessional ?” But the people seemed deaf. No one went to confession to him.

One parish priest preaches like an angel, but another does not know what he is talking about in the pulpit.—*And Saul was exceeding angry : smouldering anger is consuming the heart ; and this word was displeasing in his eyes ; this is enough to make the hearer grind his teeth. —And he said : They have given David ten thousands, and to me they have given but a thousand, what can he have more but the Kingdom ?* “Everything good is attributed to the other priest and nothing to me. He alone has holiness, learning and good manners. Better that he should have the parish all to himself.”—*And Saul did not look on David with a good eye from that day and forward.* All is over ; over forever : hatred and detestation succeed to friendship.—*And Saul held a spear in his hand, and threw it : (I. Kings xviii.)* the shafts of calumny are hurled, mutual denunciation begins.

St. Francis Xavier wrote to John III, King of Portugal, as follows : “I will tell you the reason why many things essential to the service of God are neglected. One says : ‘It is for me to do that, I will not give up the credit of it to another.’ A second says : ‘What I myself do not, I wish not any one else to do.’ A third presents himself, and says : ‘It is I who do all the hard work, and others come in and reap all the benefit of my labors.’ While these squabbles are going on, time flies, the favorable opportunity is slipping away, souls are hurrying to perdition.”

He who has true zeal rejoices when he sees that God is glorified and souls are saved, no matter by whom. The good parish priest, therefore, does not feel hurt, if he sees that his assistant is more attractive than himself ; if the assistant's sermons are more frequented and his confessional more crowded than his own. He does not judge his assistant rashly and exaggerate his faults. "*Non cogitat malum.*"

The good parish priest acts towards his assistant like a true father. He advises, warns and encourages him. And if the young priest is a little self-conceited or independent, commits some faults of the kind, the good pastor readily forgives him and attributes the fault to his youth and inexperience.

The good parish priest is not jealous and ill-humored, if he sees that a neighboring priest draws the people to his church by his grand ceremonies, by his devotions, by his practical and eloquent sermons and so on. Provided souls are saved and God is glorified, he is content. "*Con-gandet veritati.*"

He knows that, were he to rejoice in the evil deeds of his neighbor, God would severely punish him for it. But God is more liberal in rewarding than in punishing us. To rejoice, then, in the good done by our neighbor is, as it were, to appropriate that good to ourselves. O what an easy way to become rich in merits in a short time !

The good parish priest is even glad if his parishioners confess sometimes to another priest. He even calls in a strange priest occasionally. From time to time he gives his people the extraordinary grace of a mission, so that every one may have the opportunity to make a good confession. He knows that, if the people have always

to go to the same priest, they are apt to conceal some sin through fear or shame. And he seeks not his own glory, but the good of the souls confided to his care. "*Non æmulatur, non est ambitiosa.*" He does not complain like the Pharisees of old. "*Ecce mundus totus post eum abiit.*" (John xii, 19.) No ! he says rather with St. Paul: "*Dum omni modo Christus annuntietur, et in hoc gandeo, sed et gaudebo.*" (Phil. i, 18.)

"*Dux indigens prudentia multos opprimet,*" says Holy Writ. (Prov. ii, 8.) Think of all the harm that a jealous, imprudent priest can do to souls. His penitents notice that he is displeased when they go to confession to any one else. What is the consequence ? O God, how many sacrileges are committed ! How many bad confessions, how many unworthy Communions are made ! St. Alphonsus asserts "that in those places in which no mission has been given for years, very many of the confessions are sacrilegious." Now, if this be the case, what are we to think of those places in which the pastor is jealous and highly displeased if his people dare go elsewhere to confession ?

In nearly every parish there are certain sinners who give scandal. Some perhaps are wealthy, well-educated, or enjoy a high station in life. There are also abuses in the parish, some deeply rooted, some of long standing. Now to convert such sinners, to cure such evils, it is absolutely necessary that the pastor and his assistant should work together ; that they should follow the same principles. This is true also of those priests who live in neighboring parishes, whether they be seculars or religious. In this point, I regret to say, some religious are greatly to blame.

There is a good priest, for instance. He starts a Catholic school. He sacrifices everything—time, intellect, health, money. His labors would certainly be crowned with success; but the neighboring priest, or perhaps his own assistant, follows quite different principles. He tells the people that the Catholic school is a luxury, a notion introduced by foreigners and so on.

The good priest wishes to put a stop to long and dangerous company-keeping, to those shameless dances. He preaches against these occasions of sin. He warns and threatens in the confessional; but the people do not heed him, perhaps laugh in his face, saying: "Such a priest will absolve them—Father so and so—that pious religious—that learned doctor, makes light of such sins. Father so and so has dances at his fairs and even in the basement of his church!"

"It is true," says Cardinal Manning, "that we incur the note of heresy only when we impugn the faith; but we may incur the notes of error, rashness, offensiveness to pious ears, in rejecting opinions which are outside of divine or Catholic faith. Private judgment, three hundred years old and erected into a law, and even into a religion, has infected the atmosphere in which the Catholic Church is forced to live and to breathe. It is true that the teaching of theologians, even though unanimous, will not make matter of divine faith; but their consent creates an intellectual tradition against which no man can set his judgment without rashness. We should be rash if we measured ourselves against any one of them; we should be more than rash if we set ourselves against their unanimous judgment. The unanimous interpretation of the Fathers makes a rule for fixing the sense of the

Scriptures against all private spirits. The unanimous teaching of theologians is the maximum, or a high degree of human certainty in matters of revealed and of unrevealed truth. If we trust our individual reason, is not their collective reason to be rather trusted? If we think that the light of the Spirit of Truth has been leading us, does he not also lead them? And is not their unanimity the result of a collective guidance and a confluent illumination? Their combined and united light puts out our isolated spirit, as the noonday sun makes all lesser lights to be invisible."

Alas! how many priests are there who accelerate the coming of the kingdom of Anti-Christ! They accelerate it by approving of mixed marriages and accepting them without the least difficulties; they accelerate the coming of Anti-Christ by lax morality in the confessional, by their passion for money, by their bad example, by rigorism, by not hearing the Church in all things. What a ruin for congregations that have such pastors!

I grant, that a lax, easy going confessor may succeed in drawing a crowd to his confessional; but does he also succeed in drawing them to God?

Perhaps it is true that the one priest is too strict; but perhaps it is also true that the other is too lax. I ask, how can the people be reformed, how shall abuses be abolished when the priests themselves disagree, when one permits what the other condemns? Almost invariably, in such cases, the people become hardened, incorrigible.

This extreme of rigor and laxity in France—court-ladies going to Communion after dancing all night, etc., was one of the chief causes of Jansenism.

To all apparent beauties blind,
Each blemish strikes a jealous mind.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

The spirit of genuine charity should also exist between the regular and secular clergy. Secular priests should not be jealous of religious. Both have the same object in view, namely, to save souls and to imitate the Good Shepherd.

The founders of religious Orders were often secular priests and many of those now in the convent were secular priests. To be a good secular priest is in one sense easier, and yet again in another sense more difficult than to be a good religious ;—easier, because the secular priest has more freedom, and yet harder because the secular priest is exposed to more dangers, is left more to himself. You will often find the most pious secular priests become religious, but not the reverse.

On the other hand, let none of the regular clergy despise any one of the secular, put on airs and treat him with cold, dignified stiffness, imagining that he can, by such conduct, command the respect of the secular clergy. He gains, however, as much respect as the peacock does by spreading its tail. He only succeeds in drawing down upon himself well-merited contempt and ridicule. It is, moreover, a solid thought for a religious priest to remember that there are many of the secular clergy who are more zealous in the sacred ministry, more detached from the world, and more deeply rooted in humility and charity than many a religious priest.

St. Francis Xavier was one day informed that a very learned priest of the Society lived at variance with the Vicar of the place, or at least that their opinions did not coincide. Although he was an aged Father who had lived with St. Ignatius for a considerable time, he wrote to him a very serious and sensible letter. After having reprimanded him for having profited so little by his intercourse with, and the example of, St. Ignatius, he thus continues: "You, like so many others who resemble you, are greatly mistaken when you fancy that, without possessing deep humility, and without showing the same by your works and manner of life, you can follow your opinions and judgment, simply for the reason that you are members of the Society, regardless of the virtue of our holy Father Ignatius who, for his eminent virtue, was raised by the Almighty to such repute and authority. And do you ambition authority without the virtues which alone can grant it? Remember, it is better to do a little with peace than a great deal with turbulence and scandal. In the latter case, we destroy more with one hand than we build up with the other. If we grasp at too much, we lose all. By the love and obedience which you owe to our Father Ignatius, I beseech you, on the receipt of this letter, to repair immediately to the Vicar to throw yourself at his feet, most humbly asking his pardon for what has occurred and then kiss his hand. It would even please me still more, if you were to kiss his feet, promising him never more to oppose his will in the smallest degree. Believe me, on your death-bed, you will rejoice at having done this. Trust in the Lord, and rest assured that, when his divine Majesty and men too shall have witnessed your submission, the very fact of it will draw

upon you the blessing of heaven so abundantly that you will succeed in whatever you undertake for the glory of God and the welfare of your neighbor. My dear brother, could you but see the great love and affection which dictate these words, you would think of me day and night, and perhaps this love for you would make you shed tears of tenderness. Were you permitted to see my heart, believe me, you would see yours enshrined in mine."

St. Francis of Assisi, whose eyes were ever fixed upon the God of peace, gave to his monks the following advice: "We are sent, dearest brethren, to assist the clergy in the salvation of souls. Every one will receive his reward not according to his authority, but according to his labor. What especially pleases God is the gain of souls. This we shall better secure by keeping peace with the clergy than by being at variance with them. If they oppose our efforts, vengeance is God's, who will repay in proper time. Therefore be subject to prelates, and let no one, as far as possible, give way to false, imprudent zeal. If you are the children of peace you will gain both the clergy and the people; and this will be more acceptable to God than if you gained only the people and scandalized the clergy. Conceal their faults, supply their deficiencies, and thus you will be more humble."

Let the regular as well as the secular clergy be a great enemy of differences, law-suits, and of whatever may be calculated to alienate the hearts of their fellow-men, even at the loss of certain temporal advantages, as nothing temporal can equal peace and harmony. "Blessed are the peace-makers." (Matt. v.)

St. Vincent de Paul, not being left in quiet possession of a foundation in a certain diocese, wrote to the Super-

ior thereof as follows: "After having settled your accounts with the Grand-Vicar and returned every article contained in the inventory, and having obtained a receipt for everything, you will beg to take leave without complaining in the least, or saying anything to indicate that you unwillingly leave the place. You, however, will beseech the Lord to bless the city and the diocese. Above all, I beseech you not to say anything, either in public or in private, that might lead others to think that we were dissatisfied. Finally, ask the blessing of these reverend gentlemen both for yourself and for your subjects, even for myself, who prostrate myself in spirit at their feet."

"I recommend to you," writes St. Alphonsus to a Superior, "to preserve peace as far as possible. If you see that things do not go according to your ideas, it will be better for you to yield to circumstances even at the loss of some temporal advantage rather than to endanger the spiritual welfare by violating charity. St. Ignatius severely punished those who disturbed peace and undermined charity. Do everything with peace and leave to Providence whatever you cannot change."

"You have been advised," wrote St. Francis de Sales to the Nuns of the Visitation, "to begin a law-suit to recover one hundred dollars; but I advise you not to do so even for the sake of a thousand. Scarcely a saint can remain wise in a law-suit. '*Litigare et non insanire vix sanctis conceditur.*' Our Saviour never went to law, although he was wronged in a thousand ways. I do not wish to blame those who go to law provided it be done for justice's sake; but I say, nay, I even write, and were it necessary, I would write it down with my own blood, that whoever wishes to be perfect and a disciple of Jesus Christ cru-

cified must adopt this doctrine. Avoid law-suits, let the world gnash its teeth, let the prudence of the flesh be scandalized and cry aloud ; we must prefer what Jesus Christ says : “ Him that taketh away from thee thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.” (Luke xxvi, 29.) Peace is a valuable and holy article worth being bought at a high price.”

The officials of St. Francis de Sales had one day gained important law-suits. His steward, whose purse was rather poor, insisted upon having refunded by the opposite parties, all the expenses of these law-suits. But the holy Prelate would not agree to this. “ But these expenses,” said his steward, “ are very considerable.” “ And do you think it but little profit to win over those hearts which may, by these law-suits, have become alienated from us ? I, for my part, consider this a greater gain than everything else. I am a Father ; I must treat them as my children. You must go and tell them on my part that I do not require anything from them, neither for old debts nor for the expenses incurred in these law-suits, provided they acknowledge, for the future, the episcopal rights, proved, established, and confirmed by the Senate. Having gained the law-suit to keep up the rights of the Church, we must try to win back the good feelings of our neighbor, which become so easily alienated in law-suits ; if we have lost them, we should go to law, if necessary, to regain them ; for a father must make himself beloved by his children.”

“ I, for my part,” says St. Vincent de Paul, “ admire Christ our Lord who, it is true, never approved of law-suits, yet permitted one to be brought against him and to be lost.” The more favorably the law pronounced for

this saint, the more readily was he disposed for a compromise, and if a considerable loss for his opponent was in question, he managed that the execution of the juridical sentence pronounced in his favor, might be mitigated and put off, in order that his adversary might lose as little as possible. To act in this manner, requires a heart completely detached from the goods of this world. St. Vincent was a perfect model of this detachment. A valuable country-seat was offered to him as a present, which he accepted only after long reflection and re-iterated requests of the owner as well as of another great benefactor. After many very expensive improvements by which the Society saved the estate from total ruin, the donor died and his heirs went to law to reclaim the donation. The law pronounced in their favor without any compensation for the improvements. Thus the Society suffered a loss of thirty thousand livres. This blow came quite unexpectedly, as the Society believed their title well established. Even one of the judges came to Vincent to indicate the means and ways to elude this sentence. He thanked him for his kind advice, but declared that he willingly adored the disposition of Providence in this affair. But to his own he said : " God forbid that we should elude this sentence ! It is Thou, O Lord Thyself, who hast pronounced it ; consequently we acquiesce in it ; and in order that its execution may not be put off, we now already sacrifice this estate to Thy divine Majesty ! My brethren, let us still add another sacrifice to this, one of praise and thanksgiving ! Let us praise the Supreme Judge of the living and the dead for having visited us on the day of affliction ! Let us thank him for having delivered us not only from

every affection to earthly goods, but even from the goods of this world themselves and for having given us the grace even to rejoice at their loss. I readily believe that this joy is a general one for us all; for as Christ chastises those whom he loves we must look upon this chastisement as a proof of his love for us; truly, we must rejoice at it. O my God! who else than Thou couldst give us this grace! Thou art the source of all joys, and without Thee there is no true one. It is Thou, then, who grantest it to us! Yes, reverend Fathers, let us rejoice at having been found worthy to suffer something. But how can we be joyful in sufferings, they being so bitter and unwelcome to human nature? They are like bitter medicines, which would promote health much less, if they were sweet. Their being bitter does not prevent us from taking them. Why is this? Because we appreciate health which we hope to recover by taking them. It is the same with afflictions; disagreeable as they are they contribute so much the more towards the spiritual welfare of the soul, or of a whole society, purifying it like gold in the fire. On Mount Olivet and on the cross Jesus Christ our Lord suffered a most painful agony. He was abandoned not only by men, but even by his heavenly Father; but in the height of his excruciating pains and sufferings he rejoiced in doing the will of his heavenly Father. We, too, must be filled with joy when we see how the good pleasure of God is accomplished in our humiliation temporal losses and contradictions. Let us, as St. Paul writes, "look on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. x, 13.) Why, then, should not we, too, rejoice at the loss of our goods? Ah, my beloved

brethren, how well is God pleased to see us here assembled, exhorting one another to rejoice. On the one hand, we have become a spectacle for the world, for the angels and for men, because by this sentence of the law we were represented as unjust proprietors of this estate; but, on the other hand, "count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations." Let us rest assured that we have made a great gain by this loss. For by depriving us of this country-seat, God deprived us at the same time of the pleasure which we might have derived from an occasional visit to it; but such a pleasure for our human nature would have been for our souls a sweet, but deadly poison, a two-edged sword and a consuming and destructive fire. But now our merciful Lord has delivered us from this danger, and by having become poorer by this loss, his Divine Bounty wished to increase our confidence in his Providence, nay even to force us to abandon ourselves altogether to him both in regard to the higher gifts of his grace and to the necessities of life. Would to God, that in compensation for this temporal loss we all would receive an increase of confidence in the Lord, of resignation to his holy will, of detachment from this world and ourselves! My God, how great would our gain then be! I hope his paternal bounty which disposes all things for our good will grant all these graces."

Let us draw the following conclusions from what has been said:

First, we must offer to God in sacrifice all our goods, both temporal and spiritual, and consolations with everything that we may have or wish for; we must do this with full earnestness so as to be ready at any moment to abandon everything, in order to follow Jesus Christ in his poverty, patience and humility.

Secondly, we should never go to law, no matter how justifiable may be our reasons for doing so and that, should we be forced to do so, we should not do it before all means for a compromise have been tried and our right be perfectly well established. We should as much as possible follow the advice of our Lord. "Him that taketh away from thee thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also," (Luke vi, 29) for God will return to us what men take from us. St. Vincent followed this advice. Many persons of high standing and several skilful lawyers felt sorry for Vincent, and one even offered to take up again this law-suit at his own expense. But Vincent did not wish to hear about it any longer, and this for the following reasons :

First, because from the very beginning he would have been willing to give up the said estate, had the lawyers not declared that the title and claim of his Society were indisputable ; but as the law had pronounced otherwise, contrary to their expectation, God had released him from the obligation to urge his right any longer.

Secondly, as it was the duty of his Missionary priests to settle differences among the people, they would have reason to apprehend that God would withdraw his grace, should they be determined to make any further appeal in their behalf.

Third, because the Society would give scandal by it to the people, who would accuse us of being too much attached to earthly goods, of which the clergy are anyhow too often accused.

Finally, he said, it has always been very hard for me not to act up to the advice of Jesus Christ, no matter how plausible the motives may be for not doing so ; and if in

the beginning I did not follow his advice, it was for no other reason than because I thought I could not give up an estate which we had lawfully acquired, and because it belonged to a Society, of which I was but an unprofitable steward.

In conclusion, as St. Vincent de Paul says, let us rest assured that the merit and success of our actions will be proportionate to the purity of our intention and to our exertions. The Lord will reward us according to our labor, not according to the success thereof, says St. Paul. Let us do what is in our power, says St. Alphonsus, but with ease of mind, abandoning to Jesus Christ what we cannot change.

In order to secure, in a more special manner, the divine blessing and assistance, especially in affairs of importance, let us, in imitation of St. Alphonsus and other saints, add to all our exertions, most fervent prayers, Masses, alms for the poor and necessitous, and beg others to do the same for us.

For, according to St. Augustine, the Holy Ghost will assist in all affairs him who endeavors to relieve the necessitous. Hence it is said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v.)

Another fault against charity and against which the priest must guard is partiality. As soon as the people notice that the priest shows a preference for the rich, that he visits them oftener, that he is kinder to them in the confessional and so on, they are greatly offended.

It is true that if the rich, the educated and the respectable people are converted, they have great influence; they can hinder many sins and bring many to God; but we must be on our guard lest, while striving to draw to God the

wealthy and the aristocratic, they drag us downward to their own level. "Blessed are the poor," says our Lord. "Woe to the rich! How difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix, 24). "Nonne elegit pauperes in hoc mundo haeredes regni," says St. James.

The priest who associates too much with the rich, not only offends the poor thereby, but also injures himself. Among the rich there are sometimes scandals, mixed marriages, company-keeping with those who are not Catholics, dangerous amusements, immodest dances, masquerades and so on.

Now there are occasions where the priest *must* speak, and speak plainly and strongly, as the Baptist of old spoke to Herod: "Non licet." But if the priest courts the society and the favor of the rich, he has not the heart to speak out; his hands are tied; his lips are sealed.

"Non est apud Dominum Deum nostrum personarum acceptio," are the words of Holy Writ even in the Old Testament." (II Paral. xix, 6.) "Non est acceptio personarum apud Deum," says St. Paul. (Rom. x, 12.) How many priests there are, however, who unfortunately act the reverse of God.

Other faults which the priest must carefully avoid are to judge his neighbor rashly, to criticise his actions and ridicule everything he does.

"The soul of our neighbor," says St. Francis de Sales, "is the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which we are forbidden to touch under pain of chastisement, because God has reserved the judgment thereof to himself."

There is an inconsistency very common amongst men who are, by nature, inclined to judge the *interior* of their

neighbor, which they do not know, whilst they are averse to judging their *own interior* which they do know. The former is forbidden, the latter commanded. To avoid this vice St. Francis de Sales gave the following excellent advice. If an act might be viewed in a hundred different lights, always look at it in the most favorable. If we cannot excuse an action, we may lessen its magnitude by excusing the intention ; should that not be possible we must lay it to the force of temptation, ignorance, surprise, or human weakness, so as at least to endeavor to diminish the scandal. In short, he said, those who keep a watch over their conscience, seldom commit the fault of rash judgment. It is the act of an idle soul which has no occupation within itself to restrain it from scrutinizing the actions of other persons.

Be never astonished or scandalized at whatever you may see or hear ; but endeavor to efface everything from your mind, because though you may live amongst angels, yet if you wish to see and know everything, you will see some things which may appear to you not good because you do not properly understand them. Consider the example of Lot's wife who, because she looked back upon the destruction of Sodom was changed "into a statue of salt." Thus we see that, though we should live amongst demons, we must not turn our head to examine their actions through curiosity, but leave them altogether without giving ourselves any trouble about them. Rather should you endeavor to occupy your soul entirely with God than trouble yourself with this or that person. Be assured that in all families and communities you will always find something that may scandalize you, because the wicked spirits never cease tempting all men. God

permits this in order to try and exercise them in virtue. If you do not observe this advice you will never become a good Christian, nor attain holy detachment and recollection; the devil will know how to deceive you in one way or the other. Remember what the Apostle St. James says: "And if a man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (I, 26.) Wish others to be preferred before you in all things; do this with all the sincerity of your heart. Thus you will conquer evil with good; you will drive the devil away from you and fill your soul with joy.

The spirit of murmuring, censuring or criticising the manners and ways of acting of our neighbor, and especially of our Superiors, is one of the principal enemies of mutual charity; it is like a wolf which enters the sheep-fold and immediately begins to kill and devour the sheep. "There is scarcely anything," said St. Vincent de Paul, "that does greater harm to ourselves and others than this vice. Those who are accustomed to murmur at and criticise everything are never at peace; they always find something to contradict or to censure." We are respected and esteemed by others in proportion as we respect and esteem them.

This vice is usually found in a melancholy priest. Such a priest is dissatisfied with everything and everybody. He is always complaining and fault-finding. He hates to go into the confessional. He says, "What's the use of tormenting myself with these people? They don't do any better." Then sitting so long in the confessional injures his health. He can sit for hours, though, with his pipe and newspaper!

He hates to teach catechism. He says, "Those stupid children never learn anything. They do not pay attention. I have to watch them and scold them and punish them continually. And then, if they do at last succeed in learning something, they soon forget it again. The parents are to blame. They do not make the children study at home." He hates to preach. He says, "What's the use? The people do not profit by the Word of God. Whatever I say goes in one ear and out the other. Preaching to these people is only a loss of time." One day such a priest complained, "O what a wretched life to be obliged continually to do what I hate and not be allowed to do what I would like."

Alas! how many souls does such a priest discourage and scandalize! "Drive sadness far from thee," says Holy Writ, "for sadness has brought many to the grave." (Eccl. xxx, 25.) A certain writer calls such gloomy priests, "Night owls," "vinegar-cruets," "black thunder clouds," etc., more truthful, indeed, than complimentary.

God help the young priest that is sent as assistant to such a morose pastor! Whatever the young priest does is sure to be wrong. If he is kind and intelligent, if he preaches well, hears confessions properly; if he is full of zeal and tries honestly to save souls—woe to him! The demon of jealousy is roused. His every step, his every word, his every action is watched; and even were he pure as snow and chaste as ice he will not escape calumny. The pastor is full of suspicions. He imagines that the young priest is working against him; that he is trying to draw away the affections of the people. Woe to the man or woman that comes to see the poor assistant. The jealous pastor snarls at such visitors as if the evil spirit of Saul had taken possession of him.

Such an unhappy priest is often on bad terms with his neighbors, his brother-priests and so on. Even when he writes to his ecclesiastical Superiors, the ink on his pen turns into worm-wood gall.

How much our Lord hates this vice, we may gather from what we read in the life and revelations of St. Gertrude. A religious of her community who had listened to murmurs and detractions, appeared after her death to the saint, in her living form, having in punishment of her fault, her ears closed with a hard substance, which she could remove only with great difficulty and by slow degrees. Her mouth also was covered with a kind of bridle, for having uttered some detractions, so that she could not taste the divine sweetness. It was revealed to St. Gertrude, that this person had sinned through inadvertence and ignorance, and had repented of her fault; but that those who persisted habitually in this sin, would be punished far more severely, and their sufferings would be so intense and horrible as to make them objects of aversion to the citizens of heaven.

“One of the worst dispositions which a mind can have,” says St. Francis de Sales, “is to be easily inclined to throw ridicule on others. God hates this vice exceedingly, and punishes it in remarkable ways.” When this saint heard any one ridicule another he would testify his dislike of the conversation; he would introduce another topic to create a diversion; and when he could not succeed by this method, he would rise and say: “This is trampling too much on the good man, and passes all reasonable bounds. Who gives us the right to amuse ourselves this way at the expense of others? Would we like to be treated thus, and have all our foibles dissected with

the razor of the tongue ? To bear with his and our imperfections is a great perfection, and it is a great imperfection to cut him up in this way by ridicule."

If every one ought to show great respect for a crucifix, the dead image of Jesus Christ, though poorly executed, how much greater should not be his respect for the living image of God executed by the most skilful hand ? Moreover, is not every one a tabernacle for Jesus Christ in Holy Communion ? And shall any one have so little faith as to show irreverence to this tabernacle ? According to St. Francis de Sales, the greatest effect of charity is to make us love our enemies. Another effect of charity not less important is to make us patiently forbear with our neighbor in spite of all his faults. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. vi, 2.) To do this well is to be another St. Christopher, who, for the love of Jesus Christ carried all kinds of persons over a dangerous stream. It is quite an easy matter to love those who are amiable in all their manners and dispositions, but to love those who are fretful, morose, stubborn, quarrelsome, meddlesome and the like, is not less disagreeable than taking bitter pills. But this very thing is the touchstone of true charity. "I know," says St. Francis de Sales, "that little vexations on account of their frequency and annoyance are often more disagreeable than great ones, and that it often seems harder to bear the inmates of the house than strangers ; but I know also that our victory in these trifles is often more pleasing to God than many apparently brilliant victories which are more glorious in the eyes of worldlings. For this reason, I admire the meekness with which the great St. Charles Borromeo suffered a long time the reprehensions

which a great preacher of a strictly reformed Order uttered against him in the pulpit, more than all his patience under the assaults which he received from others. O Lord, when shall we be so far advanced in perfection as to bear with our fellow-men with a truly strong love and affection !

In the lives of the Fathers of the Desert we read the following little incident : One day a religious saw one of his brethren carrying a corpse. "Are you carrying the dead," said he to him, "go and carry the living." Such as do this shall be called the children of God. No faults should be censured with more force than those which tend to disunion, or to impair, in the slightest degree, the divine virtue of *charity*, which must ever be deemed the queen of all virtues, and the foundation of Christian perfection.

A sister of a certain convent wrote to St. Frances de Chantal, that she wished for a change of place, as she was unable to endure the company of certain persons, who were incessantly thwarting her and affording her subjects of humiliation. To this communication the saint returned the following answer : "Lord Jesus ! my dear Sister, in what school have you been trained, not to have learned forbearance towards your neighbor ? With whom did our Redeemer himself associate ? Was it not with a thief, who murmured at the attention shown to his divine person, and injuriously asserted in full company that, what was expended on that sacred object was absolutely lost ? Was it not with a traitor, who sold him for a contemptible sum ? O, my daughter, remain no longer ignorant of that lesson which prescribes forbearance towards your neighbor. Alas ! under the pretext of avoiding contempt and contradiction,

are we to persist in showing our want of charity? Believe me, employ a consideration, which I have suggested with effect in a similar case. Where do you hope to dwell for an eternity? Unquestionably you look forward to the attainment of immortal happiness. The dear souls with whom you are at variance, are advancing to the same term with rapid strides. Now tell me, how can you expect that God should unite you eternally in the same abode, if you cannot, for the love of him, live together for the short space of your mortal existence? Think not, therefore, of separating from your neighbor from a want of forbearance; for such an event would be a separation from God."

Another sister assured St. Frances de Chantal that it was impossible to live with a certain person, whom indeed she professed to love, but whom she could not be induced to see, and with whom she wished to have no intercourse. The holy and charitable Mother made the following reply: "Unless you adopt the plan of a charitable forbearance towards your neighbor, our Redeemer will say to you at the hour of your death: 'I have loved you with an elevated charity. I still love you, because you are my work: but I can neither see nor speak to you. A separation must take place—depart from me.'" This forcible consideration produced the desired effect.

Another sister informed her that a daughter, consecrated to God, showed her such a degree of coldness as to chill her very soul. To this the holy mother replied: "My dear daughter, it is not a principle of Christian charity to suffer ourselves to be overcome by evil. Accustom yourself, I entreat you, to follow with exactness the maxims of the Son of God, that the ardor of your

cordial charity may melt that coldness which exists in the heart of your sister."

A sister once reported that her defects had been a subject of reproach by one in the community ; "and," replied the holy mother, "what resolution did you form on hearing such censorious remarks upon yourself?" "I endeavored," said the sister, "from the pure love of Christ to excuse and palliate to the best of my power the faults of her who had treated me so unkindly." "Truly," rejoined the holy mother, "you restore to me the vigor of youth by your Christian conduct." Then with the utmost tenderness of manner towards the charitable sister, she uttered this memorable exclamation: "God grant that this resolution may never be erased from your mind. I would forfeit my life to see it engraven on the heart of every daughter of the Visitation."

CHAPTER XXIX.

RECREATION.

As the body requires rest to enable it to work, so also does the mind. The mind cannot always be recollected. It must be unbent from time to time. "God wishes," says St. Alphonsus, "that souls consecrated to his service should recreate themselves from time to time, in order to give some recreation to their mind."

The Rev. Father Mantone, C.S.S.R., who lived with St. Alphonsus for four years, related to Abbé Gaume that this illustrious saint, notwithstanding his continual infirmities, was the most cheerful, most amiable and most affable man in the world, that in recreation he always played on the piano to recreate the Fathers and Brothers, and was the very soul of recreation and conversation. However, after he had become bishop, he no longer played on the piano for fear of giving scandal; but, after his resignation of the bishopric had been accepted, he returned to his brethren in religion and played for them as before. (Rome, 2 vol. Jany. 13.)

St. Frances de Chantal assures us that St. Francis de Sales always went to recreation with a joyful countenance and laughed in a very hearty manner when there was occasion for it.

Rt. Rev. John P. Camus, Bishop of Belley, relates of St. Francis de Sales as follows: "When I was on a visit to him, he used to recreate me after the labor of preaching. He took me out in a boat on the beautiful lake

which bathes the walls of Annecy, or walked with me in some pleasant garden on its fair banks. When he came to see me at Belley he did not decline similar recreations to which I invited him, though he never proposed or sought them of his own accord.

We read of St. John the Evangelist that now and then he amused himself by playing for awhile with a little partridge.

The founders of religious institutes also have established regular hours for recreation.

It is, then, not at all contrary to perfection and the spirit of the saints to take recreation. Our recreation, however, says St. Thomas, "must be duly regulated as to place, time, character and other circumstances."

On this subject Cardinal Manning writes :

"Let priests abstain from exhibitions unworthy of ecclesiastics, from the clamors of hunting with horse and hounds, from public dancing and unlawful games, and from feastings which are protracted to unseasonable hours of night." "We strictly forbid, moreover, all ecclesiastics in sacred Orders to be present at scenic representations in public theatres, or in places which serve for the time as a public theatre, imposing upon the transgressors the pain of suspension incurred thereby *ipso facto*, hitherto in force in England, and reserved to the Ordinaries respectively.

But we may be told that this refers to the heathen stage. In the year 1596 the Council of Aquileia decreed: *Ad spectacula comcediorum, sive ad bancos circulatorum et bufforum in plateis, qui alias exemplum esse debent maturitatis et prudentie accedere et assistere clericos non dect.* The Council of Trent decrees as follows: "The

Holy Synod ordains that those things which at other times have been decreed by Pontiffs and sacred Councils concerning the life, the dignity, the cultivation, the instruction of clerics are to be retained ; as also the decrees concerning gaming, feasting, dances, dice, and sports and offences of all kinds ; also as to the avoiding of secular business." (Sess. xxii, c. i.)

"Having before our eyes the golden axiom of the sacerdotal life given by the Apostle, 'All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient ;' (I Cor. vi, 12) and again, 'All things are lawful to me, but all things do not edify :' (I Cor. x, 23) let priests direct all things to the good of others, and to the gaining of greater graces. Let them not too easily or too often go to places of public concourse and recreation, even though they be reputable, lest by wasting time they be suspected of an unsacerdotal spirit. Unless for duties of necessity or charity, let them return early at night-fall to the presbytery. To abstain from unlawful things is little unless, being zealous for the better gifts, we know how to use lawful things sparingly and to edification. 'Habent sancti viri hoc proprium ut quo semper ab illicitis longe sint a se plerumque etiam licita abscindant.' (S. Greg. M. Dialog. lib. iv, c. xi.) We therefore lovingly in the Lord beseech our beloved clergy to observe the aforesaid prohibitions not only in the letter, but also in the spirit, interpreting them with piety.

"A hard and morose spirit is unbecoming in a priest who labors in the midst of the people ; a modest cheerfulness, if only in season, is not to be reproved, but is worthy of praise. We praise therefore those missionaries who, following the example of saints, strive to draw the youth commit-

ted to their charge from dangerous representations by innocent recreations. In doing which let them always take care to refresh and not to relax their minds ; and while they give pleasure to others not to hurt themselves. Which is at once to be observed in treating of sodalities of women. Let the priest as far as possible preside over their recreations by other women rather than in person, lest he give a handle to the tongues of detractors. But let priests suppress the abuse which has grown up in some places of holding balls to raise money for the schools and other pious works.

“ As to the public recreations which are called *excursions*, we have with sorrow heard very many evils thence resulting. We judge therefore that they are rather to be repressed than promoted. However, lest we should seem to be hard in matters lawful in themselves, we exhort the pastors of souls to abstain from promoting excursions unless they have leave for them from the Vicar-General.” *

Our recreation, then, must exclude all that is unbecoming our station ; it must exclude all that is contrary to charity. “ All things,” says St. Paul, “ should be done decently and according to order.” (I Cor. xiv. 40.) Hence two extremes must be avoided. We must be careful not to say anything unbecoming a priest, such as words of self-praise, or cutting words. We should not indulge in disputes, too loud laughter and cries. We should not interrupt others in their conversation in an impolite manner, or seek to be chairman, as it were, all the time. Railleries, above all, are to be avoided and banished from recreation, as they wound charity in the end. If one ridicules another, they rarely separate from each

other in charity. The most innocent mirth, if it be carried too far or repeated too often, becomes offensive in the end. At first it is borne patiently, afterwards it is taken to heart, then the ridiculed person testifies his pain by a sad or offended air ; at last, he is irritated, answers sharply, after which charity disappears to make room for anger ; persons thus amusing themselves at the expense of others, destroy the two principal ends of recreation, make it degenerate into an abuse, and injure charity and conscience very much. How great a misery is it not and how blameable are not those who wound charity by the very means which have been established to maintain it ! Let those who believe that they have with and employ it in annoying their fellow-men by raillery, be firmly persuaded that they have a bad heart, destitute of that charity which St. Paul styles benign, since they make such a malicious use of their wit in tormenting those to whom they should testify cordiality and try to recreate them in an innocent manner.

The other extreme to be avoided and guarded against is, not to contribute our mite towards keeping up recreation, saying either nothing or scarcely anything, or appearing melancholy and sad, or too serious and too much recollected. “ As it would be unbecoming,” says St. Francis de Sales, “ to burst out into laughter in a conversation upon serious subjects, so it is disagreeable to see one never laugh in time of recreation.” “ I do not wish to say,” says St. Alphonsus, “ that, when in recreation, you should always speak upon subjects of a serious nature ; no, at such a time you ought to be cheerful, rejoicing and laughing with the rest ; speak on such topics as are calculated to cheer your companions.” “ When

in recreation," says St. Francis de Sales, "we ought to be very charitable, affable, sweet, cheerful, condescending to such a degree even as to say insignificant things, if they contribute towards recreating others." "There are some," says St. Leo, "who believe that, in order to preserve a proper decorum and religious recollection, it is necessary for them to walk about with an inclined head and a sour face; but they are greatly mistaken. The priest must not put on a melancholy, but a cheerful and holy appearance; he must unite to modesty a certain cheerfulness, and to cheerfulness a certain modesty."

Priests should then endeavor always to avoid those two extremes and walk in the middle way which is always the way of virtue. This will be done if they attend to what the saints say on this head. "Recreation," says St. Alphonsus, "must be a relaxation, but not a dissipation for the mind. The recreation of a priest is to differ from that of a secular. He must, it is true, have some honest and innocent recreation; but at the same time he must know how to seek and find God even in this exercise. He must perform it with the intention to do God's holy will. He must then not lose, at such a time, his interior recollection; he should make, now and then, an act of love, and send up to the Lord some ejaculatory prayers; let him from time to time say something about God, and when convenient, throw into the conversation on different subjects, some seasonable and useful remarks," according to the example of St. Francis de Sales who, when persons spoke to him of buildings, paintings, music, hunting, birds, plants, gardening, flowers, did not blame those who took an interest in these things, but desired that they should make use of these occupations as so many

means to raise themselves to God ; he himself set the example by drawing from all these subjects motives for heavenly aspirations. When beautiful plants were pointed out to him he would remark : “ We are the field, which God cultivates.” When a magnificent and richly adorned church was shown him he would exclaim : “ We are the temples of the living God. Oh ! that our souls were as richly adorned with virtues !” At the sight of flowers he would remark : “ When shall our flowers yield fruit ?” On beholding rare and exquisite paintings, he would exclaim : “ There is nothing so fair as the soul which is made to the image of God.” When taken into a garden he would say : “ When shall the garden of our soul be sown with flowers and filled with fruit, weeded, dressed and trimmed ? When shall it be fenced in and closed against everything that is displeasing to the heavenly gardener ?” On beholding fountains he would exclaim : “ When shall we possess within our hearts the source of living water springing up to life everlasting ? How long shall we forsake the source of life to dig for ourselves leaking cisterns ? When shall we draw abundantly from the Saviour’s fountains ?

One day St. Francis de Sales said to St. Frances de Chantal : “ The most desirable qualities in a good pastor are humility, holy joy and meekness. Be then very humble and cheerful and you will find it easy to guard the flock of Jesus Christ confided to your care.”

St. Frances de Chantal, speaking one day to a religious priest, who was remarkable for the severity of his conduct, and wishing to turn him from that mode of acting, addressed him in the following manner : “ At the age which I have attained, and in the situation in which

God has placed me, under a pressure of business which absorbs my thoughts, I have no inclination to indulge in laughter, or to give any time to recreation. Were you, however, to see me among our young sisters, you would observe that I talk and listen to them, and that I laugh, generally without experiencing any joy at what they say, for the sole purpose of helping them to enjoy that recreation which is absolutely necessary to them."

CHAPTER XXX.

FALSE, INDISCREET ZEAL.

St. Alphonsus says that on the day of judgment we shall see many religious of both sexes condemned to hell for having introduced bad customs or for not having abolished them when it was in their power to do so. The same may be said of many a pastor of souls.

However, in correcting abuses, great discretion is required. St. Francis de Sales always proceeded by slow degrees and in a very gentle manner when abuses were to be abolished, being mindful of the proverb: "Festina lente." He blamed indiscreet zeal which goes to excess and does no good because it wants to do too much at once. His motto was: "Step by step." He often repeated the words of the Wise Man: "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day." (Prov. iv, 18.) Hence it was his opinion that we should endeavor to gain firm ground by slow degrees. "True progress," he used to say, "is to pass from small things to greater ones. God himself who is altogether independent of time to bring his works to perfection, and who has it in his power to make everything reach its end at once, is nevertheless so slow in his operations that they can scarcely be noticed." He would not imitate those who, in the reformation of manners, commence with the exterior, thus to reach, as they say, the interior, troubling themselves with the former so long as to forget the latter, and thus neglect the essential for the mere accessory.

“Estote prudentes sicut serpentes et simplices sicut columbæ.” This is the very practical advice our Lord gives to his apostles. A priest may be pious and zealous, and yet may not be always a good parish priest. Not everything that is done in the name of zeal is done by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Why is it that many a zealous priest labors so hard and with so little fruit? The cause is very often that, though such a priest may have much zeal, his zeal is not always tempered with prudence.

Now, as St. Thomas assures us, true zeal is the fruit of love. “Zelus est effectus amoris.” (I 2, qui. 28, H. 4.) As true zeal, therefore, springs from charity, it must have all the qualities of true charity. What then are the qualities of charity? “Caritas patiens est,” says St. Paul; “caritas benigna est, non æmulatur, non agit perperam, non inflatur, non est ambitiosa, non quærit quæ sua sunt, non irritatur, non cogitat malum, non gaudet super iniquitate, congaudet autem veritati; omnia suffert, omnia credit, omnia sperat, omnia sustinet.” (I Cor. xiii, 4.) These then are the qualities of true zeal. These are the virtues which the good parish priest must strive earnestly to acquire.

One of the first qualities then that a good priest must possess is *prudence*. “Non agit perperam.” Prudence united with *meekness* and with the pure intention to labor only for God and souls. “Benigna est, non irritatur, non æmulatur, non est ambitiosa, non quærit quæ sua sunt, non cogitat malum, congaudet veritati.”

The rules of religious Orders say that in choosing a superior, *he* should be preferred who has most prudence, provided he has otherwise sufficient virtue. A priest

may be a good man, he may be a saint, and yet he may not be able to govern a parish properly. He may lack either the simplicity of the dove or the prudence of the serpent; sometimes, in fact, he may lack both.

A priest may be very learned, very brilliant, and yet spoil everything from lack of prudence.

Prudence guides us in applying general principles to particular cases. "*Applicans universa principia ad particulares conclusiones operabilium*," as St. Thomas expresses it. (2. 2. qu. 47, a. 6.) How many a good priest you will find, whose principles are very good, but who, through passion or zeal, spoils everything in applying these principles.

Prudence is one of the cardinal virtues. "*Est moderatrix et auriga virtutum*," as St. Bernard expresses it; "*tolle hanc et virtus vitium est*." (Serm. 49 in Cant.) Without prudence as director, all the virtues tumble into the mire. "There is no one so dangerous as the pious fool," said a learned man. Zeal without prudence can do even much harm, "*agit perperam*." Without prudence courage degenerates into fool-hardiness, meekness into weakness and cowardice, generosity into prodigality, and justice into tyranny, love of solitude into misanthropy, and even the spirit of penance into wild fanaticism.

How often does it happen that a young priest, fresh from the seminary and full of zeal, as also a priest who is sent to a new parish—finds so many abuses that must be corrected, so many things wanting—so many that should be changed and improved. He finds, for instance, so many who enter the holy state of marriage without due preparation. He finds grown-up children who are ignorant of their faith, many who have not even made

their first Communion. Parents neglect to send their children to Catechism. The children are rude and irreverent in church. Young people run out during the sermon. Up in the organ-loft the choir use their tongues more for tattling than for singing. Parents allow their daughters to keep company alone with those of the other sex. Immodest dancing and drunkenness abound. The men especially stay away from Mass and confession. There are so many who neglect to pay their pew-rent, who never give anything towards the support of the church. Then the crying abuses at wakes and funerals! A vast field certainly for the zeal of the priest. At such a sight the poor priest is tempted either to call down fire from heaven like another Boanerges, or to act like the boy who was ordered to weed a large field—that is, first to sit down and cry, and secondly, to go to sleep.

O heavenly prudence, come help and enlighten the poor pastor “*ut non agat perperam!*” Old, experienced priests and perhaps his good bishop tell him: “Take care! You will have trouble in that parish. ‘*Festina lente!*’” But the zealous priest thinks in his heart: “I’ll soon put an end to these abuses. I’ll let these people feel that they have another man to govern them.” On the very first Sunday he preaches a thundering Phillipic against abuses and scandal-mongers, and lays down his principles. “There shall and must be a reform in the parish!”

Well! the first time the people take it pretty well. They laugh and talk about the sermon. “Our new pastor has some life in him. What a pity that old Jones was not here to-day. He would have got his share. Well, those young people need a good lecture.”

This, however, is about all the good effect of the sermon. It falls like a stone amid a full choir of croaking frogs. The frogs are silent and hide themselves for awhile, but soon they come forth and croak again as uproariously as ever. So it is with the people after the sermon. They soon go on in the old style, as if nothing had been said—dancing, drunkenness, sinful company-keeping, just as bad as ever!

But the zealous priest is not discouraged. Next Sunday he lectures his people again. This time his language is yet stronger and plainer. He calls things by their right names. He hurls red hot thunderbolts at the heads of the luckless offenders. "This will help," he says to himself, as he wipes off the perspiration from his brow. But unfortunately even the second sermon does not help much either. The people go on still in the old paths.

At last the good pastor loses patience. He calls to mind the fable of the kind old farmer who found a wicked boy on his best apple-tree devouring his apples. The good old farmer at first spoke kindly to the lad and entreated him to come down, but the wicked lad only laughed the old man to scorn. The meek farmer then picked up a few handfuls of grass and threw them at the wicked urchin, but the young reprobate only laughed louder and called the venerable old man some very opprobrious names. The good old farmer at length waxed wroth and said to himself: "I will see what virtue there is in stones." And up the stones flew, and down came the boy screaming for mercy.

So the good pastor says to himself: "I have been throwing grass at these people long enough. I will now see what virtue there is in stones."

Next Sunday the stones and thunderbolts fly around the church like a meteoric shower. Several of the delinquents are hit this time and no mistake. The saloon-keepers and the delinquent pew-holders especially receive a rattling broadside.

Well the pastor has succeeded at last. He has succeeded in making things lively ; he has, in fact, stirred up a hornets' nest. Go among the young people, go to the dancing halls, go especially to the saloons,—everywhere the poor pastor is abused in the worst manner.

“Why, that man will not allow us to make an honest living,” cry the saloon-keepers in a fit of righteous indignation. “I keep a decent, orderly house. What fault has he to find with me. If one or the other drinks too much, surely 't isn't my fault.” And the young people say : “Why, he won't allow us to have any fun at all. Does he want to make monks and nuns of us ? Who can get to heaven, if all he says is true.”

The delinquent pew-holders say : “O, he's like the rest of them. The priests are always asking for money.”

There is a woman who has a daughter that she is very anxious to marry off her hands. She too scolds and blames the poor priest for daring “to speak so plainly, and that too in presence of young folks !”

All blame the luckless pastor. “He has brought nothing but trouble and confusion into the congregation,” they cry. “The former pastor was a man of sense. Everybody could get along with him.” And they even talk of sending in a petition to the bishop to have the good priest removed. They act in fact like the good widow who marries a second time and who is continually instituting odious comparisons between her present brute of a husband, and the good, dear departed one.

What is the poor priest to do now? Shall he retire ingloriously from the field of battle? Shall he, in the poetic language of St. Ephrem, "furl his sails and retire into the harbor of silence?" Some of his brother-priests advise him to adopt this course, or to wait at least until the storm has subsided. But no! "Such conduct," he says, "smacks of cowardice; and a brave man never turns his back on the foe. These stubborn people must be put down; they must be made an example of, 'ut cœteri timorem habeant?'"

The zealous priest becomes now bitter in his sermons; he becomes possessed of the "*zelus amarus*" of which St. James speaks; he becomes personal. Every one sees clearly for whom his remarks are intended. At first he *imagined* he had enemies. Now he has enemies in reality. That man whose pride and self-love have been wounded by the sermon, goes no longer to church. You will find him, however, in the saloon. There he seeks and finds companions. There the poor priest is criticised, dissected, condemned without mercy. Woe to the priest now, if he commits the least fault, the slightest mistake! His enemies now watch him with lynx eyes. Every fault, every mistake is exaggerated. One petition after the other, one accusation after the other is sent in to the bishop. After some time the bishop comes to administer Confirmation. A committee call upon him to express their grievances. The spokesman is a half-educated, restless firebrand who has had many a fight with parish priests elsewhere. Among the committee you will find perhaps an ex-school-master, a conceited, half-instructed convert, a broken-down lawyer, a sorry doctor, a few stingy farmers, but especially you will be apt to find an indignant

saloon-keeper, and a deeply wounded pew-holder, who is also deeply in arrears.

And what are the accusations?

1. Well, "the pastor was absent when he should be at home. They came for a sick call and could not find him, and when he did come home it is too late, the sick person was dead." The pastor had several stations to attend, or he had to go to the city on business, and, as he had not yet acquired the gift of bilocation he could not well be in two places at the same time.

2. "The pastor is always scolding about money." But why? Because the people neglect to pay their pew-rent, neglect to support their pastor.

3. "They sometimes noticed the sign of liquor on his reverence." The poor priest sometimes came home, weak, hungry and half-frozen; he took a little to warm himself.

4. "The priest has run into debt." But why? He started a school and the people did not contribute as liberally as they had promised.

5. "The priest was violent, personal, abusive; gave offence to Protestants, etc." Well, in the last accusation there is unfortunately some truth. But who are the offended Protestants? One is a freemason, another a divorced woman, another living openly in sin, etc.

This is but a sample of the many accusations brought against the poor pastor. And what is the fruit of all the good priest's zeal, labor and hardships? Is the parish reformed? Reformed? Why the people are worse now than they were a year ago when the pastor first came. Now they dance, and drink and sin through spite, through sheer malice.

Had the good priest only tried first to gain the hearts

of the people. Had he gone to work first and gained the children. Had he only induced the few good pious people in the parish to pray much, to go often to Communion. Had he instructed the people in a kind, fatherly manner—for the majority of the people sin more through ignorance than through malice—had he prepared himself and preached practical and attractive sermons; had he mastered himself and kept down his anger; had he heeded the advice of Holy Writ: “*Noli esse sicut leo in domo tua, evertens domesticos tuos, et opprimens subiectos tibi;*” (Ecc. iv, 35) had he called on some to help him in the work of reformation; had he, for instance, had a thorough successful mission—O how many sins, how much suffering, how much scandal he might have avoided! O what consolation he would now enjoy, what peace, what a foretaste of heaven!

It was the principle of St. Francis de Sales to reform first the heart of a person, being fully convinced that then the outward conduct of that person would soon be all right.

“Do you not see,” said he, “that as soon as a house is on fire, all the furniture is thrown out of the window? Even so when a true love for God gets possession of a heart, all that is not of God seems trivial, and is got out of the way with all speed.”

But the priest, though ever so well meaning, is unfortunately imprudent, is passionate; and passion is blind.

True zeal comes from God, and like God, is patient. “*Cum tranquillitate iudicas. . . et disponis nos,*” says the Book of Wisdom, (XII. 18) speaking of God’s dealings with men. “A few drops of honey will attract more flies than a whole barrel of vinegar,” says St. Francis de Sales.

"I'll master it," said the axe, and his blows fell heavily on the iron; but every blow made his edge more blunt till he ceased to strike.

"Leave it to me," said the saw; and, with his relentless teeth, he worked backwards and forwards on its surface till they were all worn down or broken; then he fell aside.

"Ha! ha!" said the hammer; "I knew you would not succeed. I'll show you the way." But at his first fierce stroke, off flew his head, and the iron remained as before.

"Shall I try?" asked the soft, small flame. They all despised the flame; but he curled gently round the iron, and embraced it, and never left it till melted under his irresistible influence.

There are hearts hard enough to resist the force of wrath, the malice of persecution and the fury of pride, so as to make their acts recoil on their adversaries, but there is a power stronger than any of these, and hard indeed is that heart that can resist love. "*Charitas benigna est, non irritatur.*" "*Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram.*"

We must not forget that human nature is fallen, and in our fallen state, no one likes to be corrected with bitterness.

If the people do wrong, that is no reason why we should get angry and commit sin. "*Noli vinci a malo,*" says St. Paul, "*sed vince in bono malum.*" (Rom. xii, 21.) The priest who gives away to his temper and uses insulting language, does no good to the people and lowers himself in their estimation. The people no longer look upon him as the representative of the God of peace, but

rather as a man like themselves, subject to the same weakness, the same passions.

True charity shows us in the sinner a brother in Christ, a child of God, or at least a soul for whom Christ has shed his blood. Prudence reminds us of his weakness and also of our own weakness. "*Qui stat, caveat ne cadat.*"

"*Si præoccupatus fuerit homo in aliquo delicto, vos qui spirituales estis, hujusmodi instruite in spiritu lenitatis, considerans teipsum, ne et tu tenteris.*" (Gal. vi, 1.)

The zealous priest must not only uproot and destroy the abuses in his parish, he must also introduce and encourage habits of piety and virtue. "*Ecce constitui te hodie ut evellas et destruas; ut ædifices et plantes.*" (Jerem i, 10.)

He finds perhaps very little piety in the parish. There is neither any pious society nor confraternity; or if any thing of the kind exists, it is a society only in name. Its fervor died out long ago.

The people do not belong to the sect of the "Donatists." It is about as hard to get a few dollars out of their pocket as it is to draw a sound tooth out of a man's head. They are not accustomed to give except there is a fair and a dance.

So the church, the altar, the vestments are in a sad condition. How many things in the parish that need building up! Ah, but if the pastor's zeal is not guided by prudence, what sad mistakes does he make! He wishes to do everything at once. Too many irons in the fire. Half a dozen new societies are started right away. He does not take the trouble to consider whether or not they suit the parish.

The few devotions in existence are prolonged and made wearisome by the addition of new prayers. Prayers and litanies are recited after Mass, so that the men begin to get tired of kneeling.

Instead of asking the advice of his predecessor, who is perhaps yet living, he condemns all his regulations in public as well as in private.

There is perhaps a temperance society composed, for the most part of good, sober men. Some indeed may perhaps be a little overbearing and cranky. So the society is at once condemned without more ado; and should any of the members show their displeasure, they are straightway refused absolution and even threatened with excommunication.

Every Sunday the good pastor has a lecture about money. It is true, he uses the money not for himself, but for the good of his people. But he does not always take into account the poverty of many of his parishioners. One is deeply in debt and is striving hard to pay his bills as they come due. Another is a farmer whose crop has been a partial failure. Another *has* been well off and now tries hard to keep up the *appearance* of respectability. Some are out of employment and others have had their wages cut down. In fact, the poorest are nearly always the most liberal.

But the good pastor will take no excuse, and so he makes enemies even among those who are really the best disposed in the parish.

"In omni agendo, tria consideranda sunt," says St. Bernard; "an liceat, an deceat, an expediat." (De Consid.) "Quidquid agas, prudenter agas, et respice finem," says the well-known proverb.

Of course every one knows that *that* priest is a traitor to God who shuts his eyes to every disorder, who is like a dumb watch-dog and refuses to speak and to warn when there is danger, who allows abuses and sinful customs to grow apace like weeds in a deserted garden ; but let us not forget that *he* too is an enemy of souls who tries to reform abuses by harshness, anger, imprudent and bitter zeal ; who discourages the good and hardens the sinner ; who believes too readily the tales of certain tattling women who have perhaps an air of piety ; who condemns and punishes before hearing what the accused have to say in their defence ; who never takes, and never asks advice ; who imagines he knows better than his bishop and his brother priests ; who tries to reform others while neglecting his own soul ; who always rules his people with a rod of iron.

The Holy Scriptures tell us how Roboam called together the aged counsellors of his father and asked them : “ How shall I rule my people ? Shall I govern them with harshness or with gentleness ? ”

And the counsellors answered : “ If you gain the hearts of the people and soothe them with kind words, they will be your servants forever.”

But Roboam did not relish this advice. He then called together his heedless and self-conceited companions, and asked them how he should govern the people. They answered : “ Go, tell this people : There is more in my little finger than in my father’s whole body. My father laid a heavy yoke upon you, but I will make it yet heavier. My father lashed you with whips, but I will scourge you with scorpions.” Roboam followed this foolish advise and what did he gain by it ? The Israelites

revolted against him, and he could never succeed in bringing them back. Such is nearly always the result of harshness.

That priest is certainly greatly to blame who is so filled with the spirit of the age that he ridicules every pious devotion, even those devotions approved of by the Church ; who is, on principle, opposed to pious sodalities and confraternities ; who makes light of the rosary, the medal, the scapular and so on ; who never encourages the people to practise frequent Communion ; who discourages and even opposes those who wish to enter the convent, especially when they are useful to himself ; who is, on principle, opposed to missions, retreats and the like ; who looks upon Catholic schools as a foreign notion, or at least as an unnecessary luxury ; who takes more interest in fairs and dances than in teaching his poor children the catechism ; who finds more pleasure in fast horses than in the conversion of sinners ; who spends more time in carousing, in visiting the theatres and watering places than in instructing the ignorant and praying before his Lord hidden in the tabernacle. Such a priest is clearly a stumbling block to many on the way of salvation. But let us not forget that *he* also is an enemy of souls, who is ever guided by rash, imprudent zeal ; who sends people to the convent who have no marks of a divine vocation ; who encourages young men to study for the priesthood, who are slaves of the most shameful vices ; who allow frequent Communion to worldly-minded young women, passionately addicted to so-called fashionable, yet really indecent dances ; who in their zeal for the health of their penitents dabble too much in the practice of medicine, thereby endangering often their own

souls as well as the souls of others ; who out of silly jealousy oblige their penitents by a solemn promise to confess to no one but themselves ; who impose on their penitents certain rules, devotions, and penances that undermine their health, cause annoyance to others or interfere with their household duties ; who spend too much time with a few pious women to the detriment of the sterner sex ; who show an insane jealousy of their neighboring priests, especially if these priests have the good or ill fortune to be religious.

Prudence is absolutely necessary in the government of the parish ; but it is also necessary for the priest in his intercourse with seculars. How often must the priest, in his inmost heart, acknowledge the truth of these words of Holy Writ : “ Qui custodit os suum et linguam suam, custodit ab angustiis animam suam.” (Prov. xxi, 23.) O what harm is done, what scandal given, how many sins committed by the priest who is too free in his speech, who cannot bridle his tongue, especially in presence of seculars ! What uncharitable remarks, what slippery jests and words of double-meaning are sometimes uttered ! The good, simple people look upon every priest as a saint. How deeply they are shocked at such unbecoming language from *his* lips !

Let us not forget that the priest is “ the light of the world ; ” “ Lux mundi.” He is placed on the candlestick. The eyes of all are continually on him. If he is not very prudent, he can do great harm even without intending it. “ Qui non ædificat, destruit.”

False is the zeal of that priest who is envious of the success of others. When others do more than we, when others are praised while we are unnoticed, can we al-

ways say from our heart: "Deo gratias?" Let each one try it honestly.

False is the zeal of that priest who never does anything for souls except what he is strictly bound to do, or who sends away those who come to confession to him at what he calls the wrong time.

False is the zeal of that priest who is always complaining, always fault-finding, and never doing anything sensible to make matters better. True zeal is always attractive, never gloomy and repulsive.

False is the stormy zeal of that priest who is continually calling down fire from heaven upon his hearers.

False is that zeal which blazes up like a straw-fire, but which dies out just as quickly.

False is the Pharisaical zeal of that priest who is rigorous and merciless towards others in order to hide his own infamy. What a shame for one—a great sinner—to be a rigorist towards others. *Omne debitum tibi remisi.*

There are some priests who, the older they grow, the more ill-tempered and disagreeable they become. A poor woman came one day to the house of a certain priest who was not prepared for his disagreeable temper. She pulled the bell and had to wait a long time at the door. At last the door opened and the amiable pastor appeared. "What do you want?" he yelled. "Why don't you come in?" The poor woman trembled. "I'm afraid," she answered. Can such a priest say from his heart with the Good Shepherd: "Come to me all you that are burdened and weary, and I will comfort you?"

"Put back thy sword into its sheath," said our Lord to St. Peter. Some priests, however, seem to forget this

advice. Their pastoral staff seems to be transformed into a bludgeon.

False is the zeal of that priest who seeks only himself.

"Isn't it strange," said a certain clergyman, "I've paid off the debts of the church. I've even had a mission, and yet the bishop does not give me a better parish. I'm tired of this business. I never get any thanks for what I do. There is no justice in this world. Others are promoted and what have they done? I have a great mind to ask for my exeat."

The origin of such false zeal is disgraceful. The defects of our neighbor interfere with our own; our vanity is wounded by that of another; our own haughtiness finds our neighbor's ridiculous and unsupportable; our restlessness is rebuked by the sluggishness and indolence of this person; our gloom is disturbed by the gayety and frivolities of that person, and our heedlessness by the shrewdness and address of another.

If we were faultless, we should not be so much annoyed by the defects of those with whom we associate. If we were to acknowledge honestly that we have not virtue enough to bear patiently with our neighbor's weaknesses, we should show our own imperfection and this alarms our vanity. We therefore make our weakness pass for strength, elevate it to a virtue and call it zeal; an imaginary and often hypocritical zeal. For is it not surprising to see how tranquil we are about the errors of others, when they do not trouble us, and how soon this wonderful zeal kindles against those who excite our jealousy, or weary our patience?

If our zeal is true, it will be regulated by Christian

principles ; it will begin with ourselves ; it will be so occupied with our own defects, our own wants, that it will find but little time to think of those of others ; and when conscience obliges us to correct our neighbor, we shall be very cautious with regard to ourselves, following the advice of the Apostle, "Rebuke thy brother in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Whatever is said or done with passion will not make our neighbor better.

Where do we see any good effects from harsh reproof ? We must gain the heart when we would recommend religion ; and hearts are won only by love and condescension. It is not enough to be right ; it is dishonoring reason to defend it with violence and haughtiness. It is by gentleness, by patience, by love, that we insensibly lead the mind to truth, undermine old prejudices, inspire confidence, and encourage our neighbor to conquer bad habits. When he who receives correction perceives that reproof is given with ill-humor, his own is not subdued by it, and his self love revolts at the mortifying lesson. For "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

But you will say : "Suppose a poor priest has no prudence ; suppose this gift has not been given him ; what must he do ?"

The virtue of prudence cannot be acquired in one moment. It can, however, be acquired, like all other virtues, by using the proper means. These are, 1. *Humble and persevering prayer.* "Pete a Domino ut vias tuas dirigat, et omnia consilia tua in ipso permanent." (Tob. iv, 20.) "Si quis vestrum indiget sapientia, postulet a Deo, qui dat omnibus affluenter et non impro-

perat et dabitur ei. Postulet autem in fide, nihil hæsitan-
tans." (James i, 5.)

2. Study pastoral theology.

3. Consult others—the bishop, experienced priests.
Learn to doubt. "First be *sure* you're right, then go
ahead."

CHAPTER XXXI.

EXAMPLES OF PRUDENT AND IMPRUDENT ZEAL.

The good pastor uses every *lawful* means to win souls. St. Francis Xavier played cards with the sailors on his voyage to India, in order to win them for God.

A certain priest when he came to his parish found that there were many young men who had never made their first Communion. He announced catechism and invited the young men especially. Only a few came. He took these young men to the school-room, gave each one a cigar and chatted with them in the most friendly manner. Next Sunday his catechism class was crowded. These rough young men became afterwards the best members of his congregation.

A fire broke out once in a certain town. The good priest went with the rest and helped to put out the fire. On the way home he treated to a glass of beer the two young fellows who had worked with him. On the following Sunday one of the youngmen who had not been to the sacraments for over two years, went to the priest and made a good confession.

There lived in a certain parish a cowherd, who was a careless Catholic. He led a wicked life, went seldom to Mass and neglected the sacraments. The good parish priest tried again and again to bring him to confession, but in vain. One day, it was New Year's, the priest happened to meet him again, and promised that, if he would

call around in the afternoon, he would receive a little present. The cowherd came at the appointed time. The good priest placed a bottle of wine on the table, but the cowherd excused himself; said he could not sit down as he was in a hurry. The priest placed a little money in his hand and said: "Why are you in such a hurry? A glass of wine will not detain you. How many head of cattle have you?" "Thank you! I have just one hundred and fifty." "That's a good number. Do you ever happen to lose any?" "Well! sometimes it does happen." "And what do you do when some of your herd go astray? You let them go, I suppose." "I beg your pardon. Were I to do that, I'd soon be discharged. No, indeed! I must seek for them and look for them. I must search until I find them, even if it takes me a whole week." "That's right. I am glad to hear that you are so careful of your herd. But do you think that every cowherd and shepherd ought to do the same when any of his flock strays away?" "Why, certainly. A cowherd or shepherd who would not do that would be unworthy of his hire." "Do you really believe that?" "Most assuredly I do." "Very well, my friend. You see, we priests are also shepherds. We have to see that none of our flock goes astray." The cowherd stood up. He wanted to go away, but the priest detained him. "One moment. I have something very serious to say to you. I too have a flock that God has confided to my care. Woe is me, if, through my fault, a single one of my sheep is lost. Now you are precisely one of the stray sheep of my flock." The priest then spoke earnestly of the awful judgment, the endless torments that awaited him in the next world, unless he repented. He spoke to

him also of God's overflowing mercy, and conjured him, for God's sake, not to resist the grace of God any longer. The poor cowherd turned pale and trembled in every limb. He promised to go to confession and in a fortnight he fulfilled his promise.

The Blessed Peter Fourier had a penitent who up to her twenty-second year was a model of virtue. She now, however, began to dress and take part in all the gay amusements of the world. Prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments had no longer any consolation for her. She even resolved to give up her saintly confessor. She went to him then for the last time and thanked him for all he had done for her. The saint gave her a note and said: "Go before our Lady's altar and read this note attentively." She took it coldly, went to the Blessed Virgin's altar and opened the note. She there read these words: "O Mary, my Blessed Mother, I have come to bid thee farewell. I thank thee for all thou hast hitherto done for me. But now, as the world and its pleasures are dearer to me than thou and thy Son, I can be thy child no longer. Farewell, dear Mother, I leave thee. I leave thee now and forever!"

The young woman read these terrible words. She trembled as she saw the abyss before her. She burst into tears. She cast herself before the altar and asked pardon of God and his Blessed Mother. She hastened back to the feet of her confessor; but she could not speak; her voice was choked with sobs and tears. The good confessor spoke kindly to her: "Ah, my child, has the Blessed Virgin brought you back? Ah, child, who has caused me so much anxiety, continue to honor the Blessed Virgin, as you have always done, and you

will surely be saved." The saint spoke the truth. This young person led ever after a most saintly life.

A good priest was sent to a parish which had been somewhat neglected. He noticed that many came late to Mass every Sunday. They came in during Mass, came in during the sermon. They pushed their way through the crowd, pushed their way into the pews and created great disturbance. The good priest spoke against this abuse, spoke kindly, spoke in strong terms, but all in vain.

Finally, he announced to the people that every Sunday, after Mass, they would offer up some prayers for the conversion of sinners, and especially for those who scandalized the congregation by coming late to Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation. The prayers had a wonderful effect. Ever after the people were in time for Mass.

A young man addicted to certain shameful habits came one day to confession to St. Philip Neri. The saint tried to dispose him to contrition and absolved him. He made him promise to return in a few days. After a few days the young man returned, but he had again fallen into sin. The saint spoke kindly, encouraged him, tried to dispose him to contrition and again absolved him, telling him to return again soon. The young man continued to go to confession thus for several months, till at last he entirely conquered his evil habits!

As a mother rejoices when she sees her child walking for the first time, especially if that child was a cripple for years, so does God and the priest rejoice when a sinner begins to walk once more with firm tread on the path of virtue.

Two farmers had a quarrel and were about to go to law. The good pastor showed them a picture. It represented two men holding a cow. One pulled the cow by the tail, the other by the horns, while a lawyer sat between them, coolly milking the cow at his ease. "*Duobus litigantibus tertius gaudet,*" says the proverb.

After the death of St. Canisius there was found among his papers a book containing the names of all those for whom he prayed especially. Among them were the names of those heretics who showed themselves the most bitter enemies of the Jesuits.

It is thus that the good parish priest also prays for those sheep and goats of his flock who are most bitterly opposed to him, and who try in every possible way to injure or annoy him. He thereby heaps coals of fire on their head. The words of Erasmus are only too true :

"Hoc scio pro certo ;
Quoties cum stercore certo,
Seu vinco, seu vincor,
Semper maculor."

A certain careless Catholic did everything in his power to injure his good pastor and blacken his character. God punished the wretched man for his crime. He lost his situation and was reduced to want. Now was the time for revenge, and the priest took revenge in a truly Christian manner. He took care of the children and secretly aided the family until the man got another situation. Such is the only revenge that a priest is allowed to take.

When St. Francis de Sales wished to re-establish religious discipline in a convent of men, he required but two things, spiritual reading with meditation and the

frequent reception of the sacraments. "Thus," he would say, "we shall reach our end by and by, without creating any disturbance or using any violent means." In communities of nuns he also required but two things, namely: inclosure and meditation twice a day for half an hour each time. "By these two means," he said, "nuns will be easily led back to their duties, and to the observance of their particular rules." He would not insist much upon exterior severity and bodily mortifications, though very good and laudable in themselves, as they affected merely the exterior. Upon being asked whether it would be well to introduce walking barefoot in a religious community, he replied with his accustomed serenity: "Why strip the feet of the shoes?" It is the head, and not the feet, which must be reformed. We read in the life of St. Alphonsus that he wished to introduce community life into every convent, and that he would establish it wherever he could; but it was his opinion that, if all the members of the community were not in favor of giving up all personal property, it would be better not to insist upon it any longer; "for a nun," said he, "who is not faithful in this, will make others follow her also, and then she will not only relapse into her former condition, but will be the cause of many quarrels and scandals." Under such circumstances he would be satisfied to induce them to the faithful observance of the rule, to the frequent reception of the sacraments, and to the practice of meditation. Having once informed the nuns of a certain convent that he wished to introduce community life among them, they all rose up against him. Seeing that more harm than good would result if he were to insist upon carrying out his intention, he simply said: "Be

easy ; I had only your own good in view, but as you do not agree with me, forget whatever I have said about it." He was persuaded that, if one member of a religious community would not agree with the rest, he or she would get up a party, thus causing disorders and the final ruin of the convent. Far from showing himself offended by the opposition of the nuns, he paid them a paternal visit the next day.

At the time of St. Francis of Assisi there were some Provincials of his Order who were animated with the bad spirit of Brother Elias ; and as he could not depose them without offending them grievously and without causing great troubles and disturbances in their communities, he said : " Let them live as they please. They will one day repent of it. The loss of some few is a less evil than the ruin of many. The deposition of these officials would cause great dissatisfaction, and those good brethren who obey them now in all the simplicity of their hearts, might be greatly scandalized." Hence St. Augustine would say : " As the good man of the house did not permit his servants to gather up the cockle lest by doing so they might root up the wheat also with it, (Matt. xiii, 13, 25) we must never try to remedy certain evils by opposing greater ones." Great minds enlightened by superior wisdom know this but too well and go by it, whilst officials of a limited judgment and urged by false zeal, wish to do away with evils by main force, no matter what the consequences may be ; not satisfied with the good already done, they insist upon more without considering that there are unavoidable evils, which must be patiently borne with, and that good is often destroyed by indiscreet zeal, which always aims at what is best.

For this reason St. Vincent de Paul wrote to one of his Missionaries as follows: "In remedying disorders, do not go to excess, especially if you foresee that greater evils will ensue." "Evils which have become general," says St. Augustine, "should not be attacked directly, because you not only fail to reach your end, but you moreover exasperate the minds of all to such extent as to make them unwilling to listen to any representation, no matter how good it may be. This, however, will not happen, if you act more indulgently. I therefore beseech you to indulge human weakness as much as possible, and I assure you that you will gain the affections of the guilty much sooner by compassion than by rigor. I do not wish to say that you should approve of their faults; but I say only that the means should be gentle and lenient as well in consideration of the condition and the place of these unfortunate people, in which great discretion is necessary, as also of the great harm which might arise from exasperating them.

When Bishop Fouquet, of Bayonne, was advised to forbid begging to certain religious who led a rather disedifying life and possessed personal property, he directed his secretary to apply to St. Vincent of Paul to give his opinion upon the matter in question. The saint answered as follows:

"My opinion is that you must treat disedifying religious as Jesus Christ treated sinners. Bishops and priests who, owing to their calling, ought to be more perfect than religious, should first, for some time, work upon them by their good example, remembering that the Son of God did not follow any other course of conduct for the space of thirty years. After this, they should

speak to them in all charity and meakness, yet with firmness and authority, without threatening with interdict, suspension or excommunication, chastisements which our divine Saviour never adopted. What I say may perhaps appear strange to you, but I cannot help it. This my opinion is the result of my meditations upon the Gospel truths which Jesus Christ has taught us both by his Word and example. According to my observation, everything done in accordance with his precepts has always been blessed with remarkable success. The holy Bishop of Geneva (St. Francis de Sales) and others have sanctified themselves and many others by following his doctrine. You will object perhaps that a Prelate, for such a conduct, will be despised. Let it be so for some time, nay, it is even necessary that it should be so, in order that we may glorify the life of Jesus Christ in all its circumstances, not only by our temporal wants, but also in our own person; for it cannot be denied that having practised patience for some time, and as long as our Lord is pleased, we shall, by his grace, do more good in three years than otherwise in thirty. Indeed, I do not believe that there is any better way of securing success in our undertakings. You may make suitable regulations, have recourse to punishments, to the privation of all power and rights, but will you, by so doing, make them any better? There is but little hope for it. Such means will neither enlarge nor preserve the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the hearts of men. How often did not the Lord, in the Old Law, arm heaven and earth against man? Did he succeed in making him better? Was he not obliged at last to come down upon earth himself, and humble himself before man to make his yoke agreeable to him? Do you think

a Prelate will be able to effect by his power what God could not obtain by his Omnipotence? Hence it is my opinion that Mons. Fouquet is right in not excommunicating those religious who possess property and in not forbidding them to preach during Advent and Lent in parish-churches in the country, after having, upon due examination, given them power to do so. Should any one abuse this power, his Lordship's prudence and discretion will know how to apply a proper remedy." (Life S. Vincent de Paul by Orsini.)

Fenelon advised his parish priests to extirpate superstitious practices with a gentle hand, showing no spirit of rigor, of harshness, or of domineering; that they should work against them more by way of instruction and exhortation than by commands and threats. It will be very easy to banish certain disorders if, in their place, you introduce something useful, because men, in general, are disposed to give up something if they receive something else in its place. Before commencing to abolish an error, you must try to gain the esteem and affection of those you wish to benefit, because charity easily robs charity. In many cases it is more advisable to commence to redress disorders by individuals than by many at once; because, in the latter case, some might not feel disposed to yield, and then they will prevent others also from doing so; but by trying to gain one after the other for your cause, you will succeed better in carrying your point, as the example of these will induce others to follow also. To ensure easier success, make use also of a simile or a history well calculated to convince the mind of the perverseness of an error or custom, and of the advantages flowing from its abolition.

In this spirit St. Gregory wrote to St. Mellitus, Abbot, as follows : “ Whenever Almighty God shall bring you safe to our most reverend Brother Augustine, Bishop, acquaint him with the result of my long deliberation on the subject of England, which is this : that the idol-temples in that country ought not to be destroyed ; but that after the demolition of the actual idols contained in them, some water should be blessed and sprinkled in the temples, and that then altars should be raised in them and relics deposited. For, if the temples in question have been well constructed, they ought to be transferred from the worship of idols into the service of the true God, in order that the nation, observing this tenderness in the treatment of its religious buildings, may be the rather led to put error from its heart, and when it comes to know and worship the true God, may the more readily resort to the temples with which it is familiar. Moreover, since it is their practice to slay numerous oxen in sacrifice to devils, for this solemnity some corresponding one should be substituted ; on the day of the dedication of the church, therefore, or of the martyrs whose relics are deposited in it, they may construct tents out of the branches of the trees in the neighborhood of these same churches, into which the old temples have been converted and celebrate their festival with religious joy ; thus they will no longer sacrifice their animals to the devil, but will kill them for their own use to the glory of God, and give thanks of their abundance to the Giver of all things ; seeing that thus their innocent festivities are better promoted, they will be so much the more pleased and gratified. For it is an undoubted fact that it is impossible to mould hard minds into shape all at once. He who strives to reach the highest place ascends

thither by slow steps. Thus did our Lord make himself known to the people of Israel in Egypt, where formerly sacrifices were offered to the devil. This honor of the sacrifices he reserved to himself when he appointed the slaying of animals as a part of religious worship. It was in this way that, as their hearts were changed, they should be induced partly to give up and partly to attain the use of sacrifices. Thus they offered indeed the same animals, but they offered them with a different intention. (Epist. xi, 26.)

A certain woman fell into horrible convulsions whenever a priest came near her, and whenever she was sprinkled with holy water, or Latin prayers were said over her. Several priests exorcised her, but all in vain. At last a missionary came to the place and the good people begged him to visit her and cure her. The missionary went to see the woman and said publicly that she was not possessed. He took a potato, wrapped it in a rag, dipped it into a bucket of fresh water and sprinkled the patient. He then took a dictionary and began in a loud voice to conjugate the verb "*deliberare*": *Delibero, deliberas, deliberavi, deliberatum,*" etc. The sick woman was violently convulsed. The missionary then said: "Call a policeman; the woman is an impostor." The policeman came. The woman was put in jail and was soon entirely cured.

A woman of ill-fame who by deceit and false pretences managed to pass herself off as a most respectable person, rented an apartment from a man of Christian character. After a few days he became aware of the fraud which this woman had practised upon him when renting his apartment. So he went to see the parish priest about it. The parish priest was a man of deter-

mination. He did all he could to prevent wolves from devouring his sheep. But he was a man of great prudence. Wishing to see this woman of ill-fame banished from his parish, he told the gentleman who applied to him for advice not to proceed against her in due legal form, in order not to be obliged to go through a tedious and expensive process before he could eject her. So he advised him to take into his counsels a good-humored cobbler, who kept his stall at the porch of the house. The cobbler, thereupon, suspended over the entrance of the porch a lamp which he lighted towards nightfall. The neighbors, on seeing this unusual glare, came running up, and asked: "Dominick, what's the matter to-night?" "Oh," he replied, "this is the anniversary of my wedding, and I wish to illuminate in honor of the occasion." Meanwhile, from the corners of the neighboring streets, there used to peep out, every now and again, some gallant of the lady's, and not wishing to be seen by those who were standing around the illuminated door-way, he would quickly draw back again. After a while he would re-appear, but only to find the illumination still continuing, while Dominick kept laughing and joking with his friends. The woman was not slow to understand the purpose of this proceeding, and, on the following morning, she relieved the house of her presence.

2. "*Ex confessione scitum est quasi nescitum*," says St. Thomas Aquinas. A certain imprudent confessor used to send all his pious penitents to pray before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and those who had broken the sixth commandment he sent to pray before the mission cross!

A young woman went to confession to a certain priest be-

fore Mass. During Mass the priest preached so pointedly against dancing, company-keeping, etc., that the girl's father who was present was convinced that the priest referred to her. On their return home the father accused her and punished her. From that time the girl never went again to confession. Some time after she fell sick, but refused to confess even on her death-bed. Said that the priest had spoken of her confession, and she would never confess again. She died without confession.

A good penitent came to confession once to a young priest and said that she had no particular sin to confess. "What !" said the young theologian, "nothing to confess. You ought to be ashamed. What brings you here then?"

The young theologian forgot that some persons must be aided by prudent questions ; that a person may come to confession to ask advice, or to receive permission to go to Communion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PRIEST AS RECTOR OF THE PARISH—DIFFICULTIES OF DIRECTING OTHERS.

One day a certain young priest had great troubles and difficulties with some of his parishioners. In a letter which he wrote to an old priest, he said: "If every one did his duty, he would find it easy to direct his parish." The young, unexperienced priest said nothing extraordinary. If every man does his duty, a statue, as it were, is able to direct a parish of more than fifty thousand parishioners, having need only of eyes to behold the good which every one of them does of his own accord.

But, alas ! from the beginning of the world there have been two elements—the good and the bad—combating each other. "There must be scandals," says Our Lord ; St. Michael and Lucifer combat each other in heaven ; Cain and Abel in the family of Adam ; Isaac and Ismael in the family of Abraham ; Jacob and Esau in the family of Isaac ; Joseph and his brethren in the family of Jacob ; Solomon and Absalom in the family of David ; St. Peter and Judas in the company of our Lord Jesus Christ ; the Apostles and the Roman emperors, in the Church of Christ ; St. Francis of Assisi and Brother Elias, in the Franciscan Order ; St. Bernard and his uncle Andrew, in the Cistercian Order ; St. Alphonsus and Father Leggio in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer : orthodox faith and heresy and infidelity, in the Kingdom of

God on earth ; the just and the wicked, in all places ; in fact, where is the country, the city, the village, the religious community, or the family, howsoever small it may be, in which these two elements are not found in opposition. The parable of the sower and the cockle is everywhere verified ; even should you be quite alone, grace and nature will combat each other. “ And a man’s enemies shall be they of his own household.” (Matth. x, 36.) Strange to say, not only the good and the wicked are found in perpetual conflict ; but God, for wise ends, permits that even the holiest and best of men are sometimes diametrically opposed to one another, and even incite persecution, one against the other, though each one may be led by the purest and holiest of motives.

St. Epiphanius disputed with St. John Chrysostom, saying that he would never tolerate the disciples of Origen. St. John Chrysostom, not so hasty in his conclusion, said that he would never confound the innocent with the guilty. St. Epiphanius replied, that the heresy was so impious, the crime so enormous, that true love for the faith should force him to expel this brood of vipers from the Church without delay. St. John Chrysostom answered : “ A good judge condemns no one without a hearing.” St. Epiphanius exclaimed : “ You are too punctilious in the matter.” In reply St. John Chrysostom complained that Epiphanius was too zealous, not having patience enough to listen to the truth. “ Patience,” answered St. Epiphanius, “ you mean sympathy with the cause, and hypocrisy !” “ Say rather violence and precipitation,” answered Chrysostom. “ But,” said Epiphanius, “ are you afraid to condemn heretics ?” “ And have you no fear of condemning the innocent as guilty ?” asked St. Chry-

sostom. "I clearly see," remarked Epiphanius, "that you favor Origen." "And I," rejoined St. John Chrysostom, "fear that you side with the enemies of truth." "Be it so! But I say to you in the name of God," replied St. Epiphanius, "that you will not die in Constantinople; you will be banished, and will end your life upon a distant shore." "And I also tell you, on the part of God," answered St. John Chrysostom, "that you will not reach your diocese, and that you will die at sea." (*Annals of Baronius.*) Both were saints, both prophesied truly, both were right; and yet there seemed to be sufficient cause for the one to oppose the other. Similar disputes and differences of opinion occurred between St. Peter and St. Paul, the Princes of the Apostles; between St. Augustine and St. Jerome, and many others great and eminent in learning and sanctity.

Who does not see how difficult it is to direct men so strange in their views, so whimsical in their characters, and differing so widely in their opinions and intentions? It might be asserted, without exaggeration, that it is more difficult to direct one solitary man than to rule the whole universe. The course of the material world is so regular, that he who should direct it for one year, would find no difficulty in directing it during a whole life-time. But the little world-man changes every moment—he turns like a weather-cock with every wind. One is of a hasty temperament, and does everything with impetuosity; another has a sluggish mind and troublesome disposition; he is as dull as lead and as inflexible as iron. If he be urged on a little, he begins to despond. Another is as restless as quicksilver; he can scarcely be kept quiet; another is melancholy and always looks upon the dark

side of the picture. Another is ambitious and selfish, and strives to draw the eyes of all men upon himself. Again, one desires to be flattered, another, on the contrary, assumes an attitude of distrust when treated kindly, and puts himself on his guard. What is too indulgent for one, is too severe for another. What is illiberal in the eyes of one, is deemed too great freedom in the eyes of another. One prefers a spirit of freedom and liberality, whilst another is displeased at such a spirit, and complains of the want of rigor and discipline. One is controlled too much, another too little. One considers a command, a regulation, too arbitrary and despotic, another looks upon it as unwise and unseasonable ; both criticise the directions and actions of the pastor, though they do not and often cannot, know the motives of his conduct. It often happens that the orders of a pastor are interpreted in a manner which is entirely foreign to his thoughts and intentions. This is very painful to a pastor, especially when Christian charity is in question. Now and then he is also grieved to see that some of his parishioners are not always sufficiently sincere towards him. Some approve of his course of action in his presence, whilst behind his back they murmur at it, and manifest their discontent, nay, even excite others against him. They seem to expect their pastor to be above all the miseries of our fallen nature, and therefore his faults find less excuse in their eyes than do those of any other person.

“But no pastor,” says St. Vincent of Paul, “must be surprised at meeting with this kind of crosses ; for from such crosses our Lord Jesus Christ himself was not exempt. How many were there not who found fault with his actions ! “John the Baptist came,” said our Lord to the

Jews, "neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say: he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners." (Luke vii, 33.) Some admired and believed the words of our Lord, whilst others rejected them as proceeding from a sorcerer or a man possessed by the devil and as calculated only to cause disturbance amongst the people."

"There must be scandals." The permission of these evils is not the least of the mysteries of God's Providence. According to St. Vincent de Paul, the Lord permits them to show us the wretchedness of human nature, and to keep those in fear who are not as yet firm in their good purposes. According to St. Alphonsus, God permits these evils to serve as occasions for the practice of patience. According to St. Francis de Sales, the Lord permits them for the practice of passive humility, one ounce of which is incomparably greater value than many pounds of active humility. According to Father Binet, S.J., God permits crosses of this kind to remind us of our common weakness and nothingness, which, if left without contradictions, would soon degenerate into pride, self-elevation, self-complacency, vain-glory in our actions, into attachments to offices and forgetfulness of our Lord's saying: "When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." (Luke xvii, 10.) Moreover, God permits these crosses as a means to purify our intentions; to supernaturalize our love for our fellow-men; to acquire a disinterested charity; a meekness similar to that of Jesus Christ; a constant conformity with the will of God; the happiness

of finding God as well in the bad as in the good; the dominion over our own passions; the perfection of a true Apostolic man; a heart seeking nothing but God, and faithfully co-operating with all the designs of the Lord, even at the cost of its own contentment. The Lord in his wise Providence permits even the holiest men to fall into errors of judgment, without any sin on their part, thus often causing great troubles and trials to one another, to their Superiors, and to their fellow-men. All this happens for the manifestation of the greater glory of God, and to make the saints distrust themselves and humble themselves before God, acknowledging their misery and avoiding obstinacy in their opinions; ever fearing lest they deceive themselves, and seek not the honor of their Sovereign Lord. According to Cornelius a Lapide, God permits such evils, nay scandals even, in order that the impiety of one, or of a few, may, by way of antithesis or contrast, set forth the virtue and holiness of others in greater splendor, and be as light is in the midst of darkness, gold amidst lead, the sun among the planets, the wise among fools: for, if two things of a different nature, says the Wise Man, are brought into opposition, the eye perceives at once their difference. "Good is set against evil, and life against death: so also is the sinner against the just man. And so look upon all the works of the Most High. Two and two, and one against another." (Eccl. xxxiii, 15.)

Hence St. Bernard wrote to a priest. "Believe firmly that those who, in the eyes of men, work most against you, do you most good in the sight of God. Far from diminishing your merits they will only increase them: nay, should there be a parish in which no such characters

are found, one ought to be purchased at the price of gold, so incomprehensibly great is the good that this evil, if well managed, will produce." To live with good brethren, is, of course, more agreeable to poor nature ; but to have to deal with touchy, susceptible persons, and those with whom, as we say, it is difficult to get along, is a thousand times more profitable and meritorious. Is it not then extreme weakness on the part of a priest to do all in his power in order to rid himself of so precious a gem, and to think that he will do wonders after it is gone ? Is it not great self-love to complain that his life is a martyrdom, a burden too heavy for his shoulders ? Is it not a great want of practical faith in God's wise Providence, without whose permission and disposition nothing can happen to us ? So that to those who love God, all things work together unto good, even the sins and faults of their fellow-men. Is it not to be like those servants of the good husbandman, who wanted to gather up the cockle before the time of harvest, not understanding that at the same time they would injure and root up the wheat ? "The good would soon cease to be good," says St. Augustine, "were they not kept up and strengthened by the sufferings which the bad cause them to endure." Does not a pastor, by such conduct, show less interest in the spiritual and temporal welfare of his parish than does a merchant in his business ? The man of business does not on account of difficulties shrink from, nor break up his establishment, nor transfer it to others. Is it not to show less affection for his children than a physician has for his patient, who always tries to help him, and to be useful to him to the very last moment of his life ? Finally, is not a pastor who desires so much to get rid of his

parish on account of troubles guilty of great infidelity towards God? Did St. Paul renounce his Apostleship, on account of meeting with contradictions and troubles from the Jews, the Gentiles, and his own brethren? Did St. Peter give up the government of the Church in order to escape crucifixion?

“Excuse me, sir, for troubling you so often,” I one day said to a gentleman. “Never mind, my dear friend,” was his reply, “we have to live on trouble.” A great truth indeed, which is but little understood, and still less loved by many of those calling themselves ministers of God! Troubles are indeed the daily bread of pastors; they must feed upon this bread; it is the Lord himself who gives it to them: “I have set thee to-day, to root up and to pull down, and to waste and to destroy, and to build and to plant,” “to strengthen the weak, to heal that which is sick, to bind up that which is broken, and to bring back again that which was driven away, to seek that which is lost.” (Jeremias, i, 20; Ezech. xxxiv, 4.) Great courage, indeed, great generosity, prudence, and heavenly wisdom are required, to bring about so many difficult things. “Truly, he who assumes the direction of others,” says St. John Chrysostom, “must be among them, like a man among irrational creatures, or like an angel among men, or like the sun amidst the heavenly bodies; that is to say, he must be so pre-eminent in virtue as to cast into the shade the perfections of his subjects, even as the sun by its brilliancy eclipses the surrounding luminaries.” Indeed, he may exclaim with the Prophet Jeremias: “Ah, ah, ah, Lord God: behold, I cannot speak for I am a child!” (Jeremias, i, 6.) Alas! what must he do? “As we know not what to do,” said

King Josaphat, "we can only turn our eyes to Thee, O Lord God," (2 Paralip. xx, 12.) and pray to obtain the gift of wisdom in governing those who are entrusted to our care.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DISCUSSION ON THE MANNER OF GOVERNING.

There are some who think that a pastor, in the discharge of his duties, should be severe ; others, that it is better for him to be mild, kind and full of paternal affection.

However, the more experienced say that both kinds of government should be united and used with proper discretion. Unfortunately every one thinks and flatters himself that he has discovered the most excellent mode of governing. Every one imagines himself to possess meekness enough not to be a tyrant, and firmness enough to enforce the exact execution of his commands. If you tell him that he is not yet walking in that golden mean so difficult to find, he looks upon you as a blind and ignorant man ; he openly asserts that any man of sound judgment must acknowledge that he has discovered that judicious mode of governing in which there are found as much severity and meekness as the person and occasion require. But who believes this ? No one but himself or some miserable flatterer, who pretends to believe it. Such uncommon perfection cannot be attained in a few months with so little care and effort. All that he can have is a good intention. An almost infallible sign that he deceives himself is the fact that he so firmly believes and supposes that he has acquired this excellent art of government ; for those who possess this valuable gift generally acknowledge freely their want of it ; they

daily strive to acquire it, and because they are conscious of their own weakness, they seek the sweet yoke of obedience, fly from the cross of the office of a pastor and decline the difficult and arduous task of steering a ship which is so easily tossed about by so many contending minds.

It is the general opinion that the most perfect manner of government is that which is mild but firm, or, in other words, that in which severity and mildness are judiciously blended. If he who guides others sometimes becomes displeased, his anger should be the anger of a dove or lamb which does not injure any one. If he has recourse to soothing marks of kindness, he ought not on that account to neglect the strict maintenance of discipline.

It is, however, very difficult to find any one who knows how to keep in this the golden mean; that is, it is very difficult to find any one who is not inclined more to the one side than to the other. We may venture to say that there is scarcely any one who is not a little too much inclined either to severity or to mildness. The question is therefore, whether it is better to incline too much to meekness, or to severity? to inspire fear or love? whether it is not better to be a little too kind than too strict?

Those who are in favor of severity which they call firmness of mind, courage, zeal for discipline, bring forward the following arguments in support of their manner of acting:—

1. Human nature, they say, too easily relaxes: a little rigor is, therefore, necessary to keep it up to duty and if it turns aside from the path, a strong bridle must be put upon it and a few strokes of the spur given.

2. If a strenuous exertion is not made, the evil is only plastered over and a relapse is the probable consequence, so that it may be said that meekness only keeps the wound open and feeds the ulcer which will finally burst and discharge the putrid matter it contains.

3. The Apostles themselves are called the children of Thunder, in order to show that it is impossible to heal sick souls unless you rouse them from their state of sluggishness by a little rigor and some sharp words.

4. In order to render the acts of subjects more meritorious, it is necessary that the pastor should command in an authoritative tone rather than by entreaty—otherwise the subjects will lose half the merit of obedience.

5. It is true that love is necessary, but a little fear judiciously mingled with it keeps the heart up to its duty. Does not our Lord say of his Apostles that they are the salt of the earth? If salt is not pungent enough it does not cure meat well.

6. The rod which Moses carried, as well as that with which St. Paul threatened the Corinthians, show that the rod was not less needed than the manna in order to guide the people of God; nor would meekness bear any fruit, unless severity were mingled with it.

7. Say what you will, it is, nevertheless, a sweet necessity which forces one to do good; and those inferiors who are a little roughly treated are at the end of their lives thankful for it and acknowledge that they stood in need of it.

8. Experience shows clearly enough that fear is the beginning of wisdom; and many would, perhaps, give too great liberty to nature and thus ruin themselves if they were not restrained by a salutary fear and reasonable severity.

9. Could any one guide the world better than God himself does ? And yet, although he is goodness itself, he makes use of threats ; he lets his thunder be heard ; he allows himself to be called the terrible God, the Lord of hosts, and a fire which consumes all who are not obedient to his laws and commands.

10. The Ark of the Covenant contained not only the commandments of God and some manna ; it also contained the rod of Moses ; if the sweet manna contributed towards the observance of the law of God, the severity of Moses' rod did not do less.

11. If a pastor yields too easily and accepts the slightest excuses of his subjects, he will never accomplish much. Every one will excuse himself. The negligent and slothful will gain the ascendancy, and the good and obedient will be over-burdened. Murmuring, discontent and disunion will constantly arise.

12. Has not the Holy Ghost said, that he who spares the rod, spoils the child and ruins his house ? How then can the strict observance of the commandments be maintained in a parish without the application of a moderate severity which keeps every one within the bounds of strict Christian discipline ?

13. Heli lost his children, the ark of the Covenant, his life, his reputation, and the priesthood ; and he was thus punished because he had spared his children too much and admonished them too gently. God himself gave no other reason for the fall of this patriarch than that he had been too indulgent to his children, allowing their faults to go unpunished.

14. Parish priests are called shepherds : but who ever saw a shepherd without a crook ? Does he not always

hold it in his hand to be in readiness to strike the sheep which wanders from the flock? These innocent animals tremble at the very shadow of it and keep within the sheepfold.

15. It is daily to be seen how some abuse the too great kindness of their pastor. They always want too much, and they ask for dispensations which are injurious to the common good, knowing that to them nothing is refused. They become bold and insolent, and do what they choose. On the other hand, those who are modest are obliged to perform the lowest and most laborious functions, whilst the others exult and laugh at their simplicity.

16. It frequently happens that the too great indulgence of the pastor excites contempt which, by degrees, passes from the person to his commands and causes disorder in the parish. Then it appears that the tepidity with which obedience is practised is the ruin of the parishioners, who become so spoiled that they have to be treated like glass which cannot bear the slightest stroke without breaking.

All these arguments, and many others which might be adduced, clearly show that in order to govern well, it is better for the pastor to use severity—that gentle severity, which understands how to maintain religious discipline in its primitive vigor.

Those who are in favor of mildness in governing have more numerous, more convincing, and more solid arguments than those adduced by the advocates of severity.

1. One of the strongest arguments may be drawn from the common sentiment. Let every man in the world be asked whether he prefers mildness or severity, and it will soon be seen that all are in favor of the former.

2. And this is so true, that the very priests who deal severely with others, cannot bear with the least severity in their Superiors; and they would consider themselves very unhappy, were they to fall into the hands of Superiors who would treat them as harshly as they themselves have treated others. They are forced to acknowledge openly that mildness is more powerful and influential with men than severity, and that its reign is a thousand times happier.

3. More courage and virtue is requisite to govern with mildness than to rule with severity. Mildness is, indeed, not a mark of weakness, but of strength; those who exercise it from supernatural motives, prove that they have perfectly overcome themselves, and thus achieved the greatest of all victories. "He who prevents his neighbor with the blessings of his sweetness," says St. Francis de Sales, "is the most perfect imitator of our Lord." In fact, man is imperious only because he can bear with nothing. The proud spirit which sways him is nothing but the weakness and impotency of nature, which, under the false mask of zeal, gives play to its own passions and listens only to self-love which cannot endure anything. A noble heart is surprised at nothing and applies the remedy with ease; but a narrow heart, a weak mind, at once kindles up, and under the pretext of zeal gives vent to bitter words and has recourse to threats. A wise man never allows himself to be overcome by anger or mastered by his bad humors.

4. Even those who are severe do not like that others should consider them so, nor are they willing to believe it of themselves.

5. Were there no other argument, it would suffice to

cast a glance at the different modes of government. It may be said that he who is more feared than loved by his subjects is hated by all; for it is natural to hate what we fear. Because he is hated he is obeyed only with a reluctant heart. His inferiors find all that he ordains, difficult; they have a thousand excuses wherewith to justify themselves; they never submit their judgment; they murmur at everything and approve of nothing. Their hearts feel chilled; the yoke of the Christian life appears insupportable. They say that they do not find, under his direction, the hundredfold promised by our Lord to his servants even in this life. By his harsh treatment he gives them reason to think that all the boasted advantages of the Christian life are but pious exaggerations and snares laid for the credulous. What wonder if they should turn their thoughts again to the world and seek there what is unjustly denied them in the house of God. "My sheep," says the lord, "have wandered in every mountain and in every high hill, and my flocks were scattered upon the face of the earth, and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field." Why? "Because there was no shepherd." (Ezech. xxxiv.) And yet there were shepherds in Israel at the time;—but they were such as were highly displeasing to and rejected by the Lord. "Son of man," said the Lord to the Prophet: "prophecy concerning the shepherds of Israel:—The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed; that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost. You ruled over them with rigor and with a high hand."

The subjects count the days of such a pastorage, and when the end of them comes, they all rejoice. If such a pastor remains long in the parish, he will soon find out how little he is loved and how much contempt is manifested for his person, and how much all desire never again to see him appointed pastor, or at least never again to be under his direction. They think, say and write a thousand things to his disadvantage. At last he sees evidently that, instead of having won the hearts of his parishioners, he has but filled them all with fear, so that nothing remains of his government except hatred and horror of his person.

Quite different are the consequences of a mild government. Every one desires to be under a meek pastor. His brethren weep when he is removed ; when he dies—to judge by the general outburst of grief—all is dead with him. It is in such a pastor that the parishioners find, even in this life, the hundredfold, not indeed so much the hundredfold of temporal goods and honors which they despise, as rather the hundredfold of that which is never renounced, although all else should be given up ; viz : the hundredfold of love and affection on the part of their kindred and friends ; for, he truly supplies the place of father, mother, sisters and brothers, so that his brethren may justly apply to him the words of our Saviour when speaking of a man who does the will of God : “ He is my brother and my sister, and my mother.”

6. It is true that the kindness of a pastor will sometimes be abused. But as it is only the spider that draws poison out of flowers, so it is only the bad that will abuse his mildness and kindness. With regard to severity, however, the good become provoked at it ; the wisest take offence, and every one murmurs.

7. It is to be observed, however, that those who abuse the kindness and mildness of their pastor, easily return to their duty; because they are aware that his fatherly heart is ever open to receive them; whilst on the contrary, those whom too great severity forces to lose their self-command, feel incapable of retracing their steps; there is need of a miracle almost to bring them back.

8. It cannot be denied that faults will be committed and mistakes made under any pastor; but they occur less frequently under a pastor whose mode of governing is mild. Besides, faults committed under his direction are more easily corrected, because the delinquents find the return to duty less difficult. If the guilty do not amend they have no excuse and they have to attribute their misfortune to themselves.

9. Every one can play the master. Nothing is more natural. It is always easy to command and to desire unhesitating obedience and to give vent to our displeasure, and to show our authority when any one disobeys. These lessons can be learned without a teacher: enough of this knowledge to drive inferiors to despair may be acquired in less than a week. But to bear with the faults of others with a truly apostolic heart, to subdue the passions, to appease the storms of the troubled soul, and to allow the fire of anger to die out before an attempt is made at correction, so that there may be no spark of revenge in the admonition, is manly virtue; is something that can proceed only from a heart entirely devoid of self-love and which knows how to conquer itself. I say still more: calmness and equality of mind are divine virtues, and according to the testimony of Seneca, a heathen writer, mildness and kindness are the only virtues which possess

the power of transforming, as it were, man into God, and of effecting in a wonderful manner a participation in the divine nature.

10. There is nothing more true than that no difficulty is found in obeying one who commands with the kindness of an angel rather than with the severity and passion of a mortal. Every one desires to be under a pastor whose kind conciliation places him beneath all. He who is feared by all must necessarily be afraid of every one; he who is sincerely loved, also loves without mixture of fear. Every one would rather suffer himself than see such a pastor suffer. His commands are anticipated, and, could his wishes be guessed, he would be spared the trouble of commanding. His subjects try to do even more than he commands; so true is it, that obedience has no limits when meekness gives the order. For this reason, St. John Chrysostom says: "When the Jews saw David's forbearance towards Saul—whom he might have killed when he met him alone in the cave, but whom he preferred to caress and to pardon, they obeyed David from that time forward rather as a being descended from heaven than as a mortal."

11. We cannot doubt that God knows the dispositions of men, and that he is aware of the wickedness of those who are ever ready to abuse great kindness and love: but neither is he ignorant of the fact that these very men would be much worse if they were treated with severity. Hence he commands those who have to direct others to prefer mildness to severity. Certainly, God does not wish that, for the sake of a few ill-disposed men, all the rest should be treated harshly. Let such troublesome, restless beings be governed as well as they can; but it is unreasonable

to make all the others suffer on their account. Among those two millions of men of whom Moses was the leader, there were no doubt some obstinate and perverse characters who caused the Jewish people so often to rebel. Yet God commanded this great patriarch to direct them with the greatest possible meekness and to carry them, as it were, in his bosom, as a nurse does her little child. Could a better mode of direction be given than that which God himself taught Moses, his faithful servant, and the model of all perfect pastors?

12. It may seem contradictory to say that meekness accomplishes what the greatest severity cannot effect. This, however, is a truth announced to us by the Prophet Isaias. Speaking of the coming of the Messiah he says: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together and a little child shall lead them." (IX, 6.) That is, the wildest animals will flock with the tamest and will be as easily guided by a little child as if they were lambs.

In every parish there is a mixture of choleric and gentle dispositions. If they be treated harshly, there will be neither peace nor harmony. The bad will become worse; and the good will be deeply afflicted at seeing lambs treated like wolves, children like slaves. But if the spirit of meekness prevails the bad will sooner or later become ashamed of their faults and acknowledge them; the good will be encouraged to strive after still higher perfection, and to bear charitably with the faults and weaknesses of their brethren.

13. In the Old Testament God has taught us this truth in the most wonderful manner. Eliseus sent his

staff to restore the son of the Sunamitess to life ; but in vain. He was obliged to go himself, lay himself upon the little corpse, and by his breath bring back the soul into the body. St. Peter Damian makes the following reflection upon this miracle. His remarks suit our subject admirably. He says that severity and the rod never raise those who have fallen : they rather kill the living than restore the dead to life. But when a pastor makes use of his power and authority like another Eliseus, when he acts kindly and condescends to the weakness of those who have fallen, and who, in this state, resemble a dead body, he will be able at once to awaken them to a better life, and to restore them to their good mother, the Church and to the way of perfection. When the disciples of our Lord were about setting out to preach the Gospel, he forbade them to take either staff or stick with them ; bidding them go bare-footed, and speak nothing but peace and mercy.

14. What one day befell Elias, is worthy of notice. This holy man possessed sincere and burning zeal. If what he desired were not done quickly, he listened to nothing but his zeal. He even went so far as often to wish himself dead : Now God once allowed him to see something that might serve as a most wholesome lesson to him. On a certain occasion in which his zeal was at its height, and at the very moment he had wished for death, God commanded him to keep himself ready to see his Majesty. He immediately heard so great a crash, that it seemed as if the elements were let loose and the mountains were moving from their places. But the Prophet was told that God was not in this awful crash. Then he heard the stormy whistling of a furious north-

wind which appeared to uproot everything. Again was the Prophet told that God was not in the storm. This was followed by a fire which threatened to lay everything in ashes. Once more was he told that God was not in this destructive fire; that the divine Majesty took no pleasure in such violent, stormy things. At last the Prophet perceived an east-wind blowing gently and evenly, with a slight and extraordinarily sweet rustling. "Ah," said Elias, "this is certainly the Lord God." He cast himself upon the ground, and veiling his head with his mantle, worshipped God, and gave him thanks for having made known to him the workings of his divine Spirit, and what was most pleasing to him upon earth.

15. The power of meekness is also most beautifully illustrated in the Apocalypse. (XXI.) St. John relates that after God had shown him an almost incalculable number of saints in the kingdom of heaven, he saw only one single lamb leading them all. From this we learn that since a lamb, the symbol of meekness, governs paradise, no other virtue should be raised to the throne on earth. Should any one, unfortunately, abuse such a mode of governing, should the wickedness and perverseness of an individual serve for some to blame the conduct of such a pastor, let him have recourse to God and thus address him: "If this manner of acting is displeasing to Thee, my Lord and Master, why hast Thou so repeatedly and so expressly commanded us to direct others in this manner? I have followed Thy example: hast Thou not given it to be imitated, and even confirmed it by miracles? Yea; even those among Thy saints who have been the most zealous for Thy glory, have not acted otherwise."

16. It is said of Moses that he was the meekest man of his time ; that the people would rather speak with him than with God himself, who only spoke in thunder ; and that his manner of treating every one was so attractive that he was the king of hearts, and the god of Pharaoh himself. For this reason St. Ambrose does not hesitate to say that the forbearance and kindness of Moses won for him more hearts and were more effectual in keeping that large number of men in awe than the very miracles which he so frequently wrought in their behalf. Notwithstanding the frequent murmurs of the people, their calumnies, their reproaches, apostasy and other indignities, he acted towards them with the same kindness, taking no other revenge than that of pouring forth his prayers for them. Justly, then, did our Lord honor him with this eulogium : “ For Moses was the meekest among men.” Hence Tostat says that God himself assists those whose moderation seems to put an obstacle to the success of what they have undertaken, and he brings about by his own power what they themselves cannot accomplish. When Moses was ridiculed by Aaron and Mary for having married an Egyptian woman, his meekness was so great that he uttered not a single word of resentment, nor expressed any desire of revenge. But, says Tostat, when God saw his meekness, he turned all to the advantage of his servant. He first admonished Aaron and Mary of their fault, and then punished them for it. From this we learn that God, who forbids his servant to take revenge on his enemies, becomes himself his protector when he sees the virtue of his servant abused, and does for him what his extraordinary meekness would never have allowed him to do for himself.

The text of the fact above given says that God became indignant at the fault of Aaron and Mary, in order to show us in an impressive manner that nothing is so intolerable in the eyes of men, of angels, and of God himself as to see too great kindness abused, and to perceive that a person is ill-treated, merely because *he* never treats any one unkindly, nor knows what vengeance is.

Here, however it may be objected, why did Moses, who is held up to us as a model pastor, have a number of the people of God killed, and why did he praise those who laid their hands upon their own kindred? This awful butchery ought surely to be looked upon as great cruelty. To this we may answer that we do not say that meekness should allow sin to go unpunished, and that it should not be troubled at anything. That would be too great a cowardice, by which one would become guilty before God and man. But what we insist upon is, that we should chastise as Moses did. On the one hand he was willing to die for the people; for, when God was about to destroy them, he offered himself as an expiatory victim to the anger of the Lord, so dearly did he love that sinful race. On the other hand, when Moses was obliged to punish, he knew how to separate crime from the perpetrators of it: he punished crime with death; its perpetrators he tried to save as far as he could. At least he tried so to purify his indignation that no shadow of passion appeared in it, and he so far followed the dictates of his meek heart as to make use of no other sword save the golden one of divine love.

17. Solomon, perceiving that God acted in so mild a manner, expressed his joy at it in the Book of Wisdom: "Great God!" he cries out, "what joy it is for me to see

Thee, the Mighty Lord of Hosts, judging men so mildly and acting towards us so considerately, as though Thou didst fear to hurt us, or cause us the least sorrow ! O, how happy are we, that Thou canst do all Thou wilt, and that Thou wilt not what Thou canst do. By this Thy gentle manner of treating us Thou surely dost wish to teach us that meekness is the bond of union. Ah ! since Thou art so lenient to Thine enemies, with what goodness and love wilt Thou not guide Thy children, who are as the apple of Thine eye." Solomon felt strongly impressed by this divine example ; he imitated it, and was called the peace-making king—*Rex pacificus*. After he had considered the Lord of lords preferring to send down manna from heaven for his sinful people, and thus win their hearts by mildness rather than pour out his wrath upon them, he tried to govern so moderately and so kindly as to deserve to be called the joy of the Jewish people. Is not this example sufficient to convince us ? Is man wiser than God ? Does the creature know how to govern better than the Creator ?

18. The whole of the New Testament is full of the great examples of the humility and meekness of Jesus Christ. All his precepts might be reduced to the one precept of love and mercy. One day when the apostles felt themselves provoked because the inhabitants of a certain town would not allow them to enter it, they asked of our divine Saviour to make fire come down upon them from heaven. But this God of goodness and mildness blamed the apostles for this request, telling them that they spoke not as apostles ; that this severe spirit was not the spirit which he had so often preached and sought to impart to them. " Ye know not of what spirit ye

are." With what great patience and meekness did he, for three years, bear with Judas, his betrayer, a thief, without depriving him of the office of procurator, or deposing him from apostleship. He did not even so much as reveal his crimes to any one.

19. With regard to St. Peter, we know that he wept more than he commanded; and when there was question of entrusting to him the government of the Church, Jesus Christ required of him nothing but love. Peter was asked if his love was greater than that of the other disciples—our Lord seeming, as it were, to inculcate that love and meekness were the only means by which to govern well.

20. "Now, we that are stronger," says St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (xv, 1-3) "ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of you please his neighbor for his good unto edification. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon Me." And again he writes to the Thessalonians: "But we became little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children. So desirous of you, we would gladly have imparted to you, not only the Gospel of God, but also our own souls, because you were become most dear to us." And again he says: I have shown you all things, etc. (Acts xx, 25.) I have shown you not only by my refusal of gifts, by my hardships, tears, affections, preaching, but also by my own manual labor, how you must receive and treat weak, pusillanimous souls.

How truly beautiful are the remarks of St. Gregory on this passage. "If any one of us," says he, "had converted a very rich man to the service of God, and

should afterwards suffer from a want of the necessities of life, and see that his rich convert would not come to his aid, would he not at once despair of that rich man's salvation? Would he not think that he had troubled himself in vain with him, and that it was useless to interest himself any longer in such a convert, seeing that he would not bestow the first fruit of his conversion upon his teacher? But Paul, being by his virtue of meekness, solidly grounded on the summit of virtues, perseveres in preaching, in loving, in order to accomplish the good he had begun."

Thus, by this persevering meekness and forbearance, he taught his disciples how they should always endeavor to exercise towards their neighbors that spirit of supernatural sweetness, which is, as it were, the cream and flower of charity. He took the greatest possible care not to alienate in the least the hearts of the weak from Jesus Christ. If you see the great apostle represented with a sword in his hand, you must not fancy that he used it in governing those whom he had gained over to Jesus Christ. The sceptre of his authority and power were his tears. "Ever remember that for three years I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you, night and day." (Acts xx, 31.) Who could resist such tears? Who is able not to weep when he sees Paul weep? "From what fountain," says St. John Chrysostom (hom. 12. in epist. ad Coloss.) "have flowed so many streams of water as flowed tears from the eyes of St. Paul? What fountain can you compare to his tears? Perhaps the one in Paradise which waters the whole earth? But even this is not equal to his tears. He carried all the faithful in his heart, in his memory, on his lips; as a mother or a nurse

carries her child on her bosom." "Were we allowed," says St. Chrysostom speaking in the person of St. Paul, "to cut open our heart and show it to you, you would see in it yourselves : men, women, and children, every one occupying a large portion of it ; for, so extensive is the power of charity, that it enlarges the heart so as to surpass even the capacity of the heavens." This forbearing charity of St. Paul explains why he could write to the Galatians: (IV, 14.) "You received me as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ, — — — and if it could have been done, you would have plucked out your own eyes and would have given them to me." No wonder that the Christians wept bitterly and thought they had to die of grief when they had to separate from so good a father who spoke and effected more through his eyes than by his lips.

In the same manner, every one whose duty it is to save souls and to guide and lead others to perfection, must bear, nay, even make all efforts to cure the infirmities of those under his charge. "It is a sign that one is possessed of heroic virtue," says Cornelius a Lapide, "if he knows how to bear generously and patiently the weaknesses of his fellow-men." For this reason St. John Chrysostom (hom. 52) says so beautifully : "Our tongue becomes, as it were, that of Christ himself, if we imitate his meekness in speaking, in teaching, in reproving." And St. Dionysius says, "that to govern the flock of Jesus Christ with great meekness and gentleness is considered by the divine Pastor as a proof of the most excellent charity towards himself." (Epist. 8. ad Demophilum.)

21. All the great saints who were founders of religious Orders governed with great mildness. St. Macarius was

called the "God of the Monks," because, although he directed so many thousands of men, he was never seen to be angry, nor did a severe word ever pass his lips.

22. One day the holy Abbot Poppon was reproached for his great meekness; he was told that he would ruin the whole Community by his over great kindness and that he was exposing himself to eternal damnation. He replied: "O my brethren, how happy would I be, if I were damned because I had too much charity! Could I not justly answer Jesus Christ, my Master: Why didst Thou teach us to learn of Thee humility and meekness of heart, if Thou didst not wish us to practise them, and if Thou condemnest those who have imitated Thee in the exercise of these sublime virtues?"

23. In his second sermon on the Epistle to the Romans St. Basil gives to patience and meekness the preference over virginity, fasting, and all that is heroic in the exercise of the other virtues, and asserts that the possession of this virtue is sufficient reason to class a man among the Seraphim. Saul, who was inflamed with an implacable hatred of David, and who sought on every occasion to sacrifice him to his vengeance, was so greatly affected by David's meekness that he often called him his son, and could not help overwhelming him publicly with praise. A sage of ancient times was accustomed to say that golden chains were better suited to fetter the heart than iron ones. This truth was even admitted by the heathen.

24. On the words of the Holy Gospel, "Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis—Come to me all ye who labor," St. Augustine says: "Why do we all labor, if not because we are weak, perishable mortals, carrying costly vessels, which cause us mutual anxiety? But, if the flesh is strait-

ened, then let the bounds of charity be enlarged." And upon the words : "Tollite jugum meum super vos et discite a me—Take My yoke upon you, and learn of me"—he says : "Our Lord tells us to learn of him not to create the world, not to make all visible and invisible things, not to work wonders in the world, not to raise the dead to life, and the like ; but, learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart—*quoniam mites sum et humilis corde.*" What this great Doctor of the Church taught in these words, he also practised, as he tells us in his twenty-sixth homily : "Look upon me," he says, "as the mother of your souls, which I desire to ornament, as a mother, with her own hands, adorns her daughter, in order that they may appear unblemished before the tribunal of the eternal Judge. Desirous of providing them not only with ornaments, but also with remedies, I try to mend what is broken, to heal what is wounded, to cleanse what is stained, to restore what is lost, and to adorn with spiritual pearls what is pure."

25. St. Bernard acknowledges that when he was a young abbot he was too severe through injudicious zeal, and thereby rendered himself guilty before God and man. Every one was afraid of him, and some tried even to avoid him. Perceiving this, he begged pardon, changed his manner of acting, and adopting and following principles which were directly contrary to those by which he had previously been influenced, he very soon won the hearts of his brethren, and governed seven hundred monks with as much ease as he could have guided a little lamb. Nothing could equal his gentleness. He was accustomed to tell his subjects that he desired to be a kind mother to them : he called them his eyes, his heart, &c. From that

time forward everything that was done in the convent was performed through love. If he commanded anything, his brethren ran to fulfil the command; they felt no other pain in the execution of it, than the fear that one might fulfil their abbot's orders quicker than the other. His maxim was that he who desires to guide others well, should direct them rather by entreaty than by command: "By praying and entreating rather than by commanding. Entreat rather than command." In one of his sermons on St. Magdalene, he the meek St. Bernard expresses his surprise that when God wished to punish his sinful people, he asked permission of Moses to do so. This astonishment at the great respect shown by God to his faithful servant, led the holy abbot to search into the cause of it: the decision he gave was that God had no other end in view than to teach us that meekness is the first quality of a good master. Has God ever asked permission to do good to us? And yet, when there is question of punishment, he delays and begs leave for it. Does he not plainly indicate by this that it is his will that we should bind his hands and wrest from him the sword raised to strike us? Can any one think to please him by treating a poor little sheep roughly—that sheep for which he so diligently sought, and which when found, he carried, in the midst of so great difficulties, upon his shoulders and invited heaven and earth to rejoice with him upon its restoration? Ah! you who govern severely, reflect that it is for this very sheep that Jesus Christ has worked so many miracles. A man like you would have received Magdalene very ungraciously on beholding her loaded with crimes; but Jesus Christ, who knew better, acted towards her as one should always act towards sinners, receiving her kind-

ly and affectionately. Instead of being her severe judge he became her kind defender ; and, as St. Bernard says, received her with the greatest affection. He hid her in the bowels of his mercy. He acted like the father of the prodigal, who, as St. Peter Chrysologus remarks in his sermon upon that subject, gave no other answer to his son's appeal for pardon than to fall upon his neck and kiss him. " And he kissed him. No other reproach did his father make him than a kiss. Thus does love revenge itself !" When a good father sees his son at his feet begging for pardon, he raises him up, presses him to his heart, and for his sole punishment gives him the kiss of peace. The most excellent means to guide others is to lavish benefits upon them rather than to load them with punishment and reproaches.

26. The letter written by St. Francis of Assisi to Peter of Catana, the Vicar-General of his Order, who had complained of the irregularity of some of the brothers, is worthy to be quoted here : " May our Lord," writes he, " protect you and preserve you in his holy love ! I recommend to you, dear Brother, so great patience in all your difficulties, that, if any of your brethren oppose you, or even scourge you, you may take it as a favor, and wish it to be thus, and not otherwise. Love those who treat you thus, and desire nothing more from them than what God may send you. Love them so as to wish them to become better Christians. By this, I will know whether you love God and me, his and your servant : namely, if no brother in the world, no matter how much he may have sinned, will ever be dismissed from your presence without having been pardoned. If he does not seek for pardon, ask him whether he would not like to be

pardoned. Should he come to you a thousand times afterwards, love him more than you love me, so that you may lead him to the practice of virtue and be always merciful to such brethren. Communicate this advice also to the Guardians, as much as possible living up to it yourself at all times. Do not allow the Brothers who may be aware of some one's sins to put him to the blush, or to think the less of him. Let them rather have pity on him and keep his fault secret, for, "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick."

27. St. Vincent de Paul says: "No better means can be used by pastors to enforce submission than mildness." "Be careful," he wrote to a priest, "not to be yourself a burden to any one. Treat all kindly and respectfully, and command rather by entreaty than with authority. Nothing more easily wins the heart than an affectionate and humble demeanor. This readily leads to the fulfilment of wishes which tend to the honor of God and to the salvation of souls."

28. St. Jane Frances de Chantal said: "I have made use of different modes of governing and have found none better than that based on patience and meekness." The more she increased in age and in perfection, the milder she became in the direction of her religious. In the latter years of her life she wrote as follows: "I have looked and turned to every side; I have weighed and tried every method of governing and have at last found that that which is mild, humble, sincere, and forbearing, is the best." Again, she wrote to a Superior: "My dear daughter, be firm in maintaining the rule, but be also careful to be more strict with yourself than with others. This I mean, not with regard to your corporal in-

firmities— for in this respect you ought to be charitable and lenient to yourself, otherwise you will be a source of anxiety to your daughters,—but I mean it with regard to spiritual weaknesses of you daughters. The longer I live the more clearly I see how necessary mildness is to gain entrance into hearts and exercise influence over them so as to lead them to the fulfilment of their duty towards God. Conduct then your subjects with a sweet, charitable and cordial solicitude, free of anxiety and overgreat care. I know this is the best means to meet with success in the direction of souls. The more kindness, frankness, and charitable forbearance you manifest, the more you will gain upon the hearts of your subjects, which is the great means to advance them in the perfection of their vocation. Being in the complete possession of their hearts you will find it an easy task to guide them as you wish and to keep them united among themselves, to yourself, which is the blessing of blessings in convents. Our poor nature always requires some relief and comfort ; if your subjects find it within the convent walls, they will never be tempted to seek for it without ; which is certainly a great blessing for them.” “ Believe me,” said St. Francis de Sales, “ pastors render great charity to their subjects by giving them ample time to say everything that troubles them without hurrying them, or showing themselves annoyed with them, for then they feel relieved and disposed to receive with profit the advice given them afterwards. Certain trifles are often to the weak-minded as troublesome as great pains are to generous souls. If your subjects have not a special love for and confidence in you, they will entertain particular friendships among themselves, which are a true pest in religion.”

29. One day when St. Alphonsus was grossly insulted, every one except the saint himself felt indignant at the outrage. "See what it is to be a bishop," said he; "if a father does not bear with the misdemeanor of his children, who will?" When, on another occasion, St. Alphonsus was insulted by a priest, the arch-deacon Rainone who was present said to him: "My lord, no one would dare to act thus, if your condescension were not so great as to encourage insolence." "Ah," answered the venerable saint, "for forty years have I been trying to acquire a little patience, and would you have me lose it in a minute?" On another similar occasion Father Caputo, who was highly incensed at an insult offered to the holy Bishop, wanted St. Alphonsus to punish the offender. "Does not your lordship see that your kindness is abused?" asked Father Caputo. The saint answered with a pleasant smile: "Father Monitor, I have had no little trouble to acquire a slight degree of patience. God alone knows how much it has cost me! It is the fruit of constant struggles, and shall I now lose it in one minute?" Father Caputo said that the saint had acquired such perfect mastery over himself that he no longer appeared to be a man, but an angel in human form. Father Don Sebastian de Jacobis, C.S.S.R., relates that when in the presence of St. Alphonsus the question was proposed whether mildness or severity was more useful in the direction of souls, the holy Bishop answered as follows: "Mildness is more in accordance with the spirit of God and of the Gospel. A severe pastor makes his subjects imperfect and deceitful; because influenced by his severity they will act only through servile fear. Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart God

dealt gently with Adam ; Jesus Christ acted mildly towards Judas and the imperfect disciples. What good did the Jansenists do by making a tyrant of our Lord ?” As Alphonsus always kept the example of our Lord before his eyes in order to imitate him, he let no opportunity pass of practising the virtue of meekness of which Jesus Christ had set the example. “It seems,” says Canon Robini, “as though I see the saint now, ever master of himself, kind and amiable to every one, always with a sweet and cheerful smile upon his lips.” “You cannot imagine,” wrote the saint to some one in Naples, “how hard it is for me to treat certain persons harshly. It is my opinion that more is accomplished by kindness than by severity and force.” If he remembered having made use of somewhat harsh language he sought an excuse to recall the person to whom he had thus spoken, and then gave him some proof of affection. Once he thought he had displeased the physician. So he sent for him to come and feel his pulse, although he was not at all sick. He did this only to show that he had no ill feeling against him. Severe towards himself only, he treated the greatest sinners with inexpressible meekness. Without excusing the sin, he showed the greatest compassion for the sincerely repentant sinner. It was his opinion that the more deeply a soul was immersed in sin, the greater ought to be the compassion of the confessor, in order to rescue it from the clutches of Satan, and cast it into the arm of Jesus Christ. In his old age he said that he did not remember ever having sent away a sinner without having succeeded in reconciling him with God, much less with having treated any one harshly.

He was always most careful to anticipate with kind-

ness the wants of the sinner, especially when he perceived that the sinner despaired of conversion. He was so skilful in gaining hearts that he drew them almost irresistibly to Jesus Christ. The lower the condition was of those who had recourse to him, the more friendly was their reception. The consequence was that many who had been great sinners, led under his direction a holy life and died in the odor of sanctity. (Tannoja's Life of St. Alphonsus, Vol. I, chap. 12, 13.) From this we may infer how kind a father he must have been towards his own brethren in religion. We shall never be able fully to understand it. He said and with truth that he was ready to lay down his life for every one of them.

In the life of Catherine McAuley, the Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, we read that she could never be induced to give vinegar applications a trial; she had read and heard quite enough about them; crossness she would not hear of at all: moroseness she deemed odious in a religious, especially so in a Superior, even seriousness, unless quite brief, she regarded as inadmissible. She practised the same unfailing kindness to every one; she had never tried any method of governing but one and that was the gentlest of the gentle. When anything was to be done, she would entreat in the humblest terms; a command never issued from her lips. Her very manner of addressing the Sisters won them. Whether in speaking or writing to them, she always prefaced her remarks by some endearing epithet, as, "my dearest child." She loved to yield to them as much as possible, and, like St. Anselm, she took this method to prove that she had become a little child for the kingdom of heaven. She strove even to gratify their inclinations and when she

could not do so, she was sure to make up for the disappointment in some way or other. Such then are the sentiments of charity with which pastors, in imitation of the saints, ought to be animated towards their parishioners.

How just then is the remark of St. John Chrysostom upon the words: "*Ecce ego mitto vos sicut oves in medio luporum*—Behold, I send you as sheep into the midst of wolves." "The Apostles," he says, "certainly understood it to be a new kind of warfare, an unusual mode of fighting when they were sent by Christ, without shoes, staff, girdle, or purse, and commanded to depend for food and raiment upon those who would receive them into their houses. They were told, moreover, to go abroad with the meekness of a lamb, though they were to go in the very midst of wolves. Nay, Christ even commanded them to put on the simplicity of doves, assuring them that he would manifest his power by causing sheep to abound where wolves had been superabundant; that, although in the midst of wolves and lacerated by them, yet they would not only not be devoured by them, but that they would change them into lambs." It is certainly a greater and more admirable work to change the hearts of enemies to the better than to kill them.

"Let us blush for shame, since we act so differently towards our enemies, rushing upon them like wolves. As long as we act the part of sheep we shall conquer; even though a thousand wolves should surround us, we shall come off victorious. On the contrary, when we act like wolves we shall be conquered; the care of the divine Shepherd will be withdrawn from us; for his duty it is to guard sheep, not wolves." The two following examples are striking proofs of this doctrine. In the speedy pro-

motion of St. Anselm to the office of Prior, jealousy was excited, as he had only lately entered the monastery. Various intrigues were formed against him. One monk especially, Osbere, a young man of fine mind and very skilful at all kinds of work, persecuted him continually in every manner which his ill-humor suggested. Feigning not to remark his behavior, the holy Prior undertook to gain by kindness the heart of one whose real worth he appreciated. He bore with his whims, praised his talents, excused his faults on account of his youth, and granted him every lawful favor. By this manner of acting he soon softened and changed his rival, so that Osbere became not only submissive and docile, but quite devoted to his Superior. By degrees Anselm withdrew the concessions he had before made on account of his age, and by a gradual increase in strictness of discipline, he finally led his young disciple to the perfect observance of the severe rule of his Order. Osbere learned to bear with everything; he became humble and docile and proved himself a worthy imitator of the example and lesson of his master. He loved him. The gentle kindness of Anselm had triumphed. Soon after Osbere fell seriously ill and died. St. Anselm made a vow to say Mass daily for the repose of the soul of the young Brother. He was faithful to this vow as long as he lived; for, if he himself was unable to say Mass, he had the Mass said by another priest. (Life of St. Anselm by Dr. C. Wurzbach.)

St. Martin acted in the same manner. He bore with wonderful meekness the insults heaped upon him, and finally gained the heart of one of his greatest enemies. When Britius, one of his priests and his secretary, was persecuting him with continual calumnies and abuse, the

rest of his household were astonished that the holy bishop did not punish so impious a man and depose him from office. On expressing their surprise, he replied : " Christ, our Lord, bore with Judas, his betrayer ; ought not I then to bear with Britius, my calumniator ? " By his meekness he converted Britius, and so pleaded his cause with God that he obtained for him the grace of becoming a saint, and his worthy successor in the bishopric, as he had foretold. (Sulpitius' Life of St. Martin.)

The saints tell us that the Old Testament was the law of rigor. In it everything was threatened with thunderbolts, death and instantaneous punishment. God was pleased to be called the Lord of Hosts. What did he gain by all this ? Every one fled from him, scarcely any one served him willingly, and all would rather speak with his servant, Moses, than with him. In the New Testament the Word made Flesh took a different course. He called himself the Lamb of God. He avowed that he had come for poor sinners. He preached nothing but meekness. He repulsed no one. Witness St. Magdalene, Zacheus, and the Publican. This amiability of his won all hearts and converted more sinners than did his most zealous sermons. The Jews saw this plainly, and it was on this account that they concluded to kill him, believing that no one would be able to resist so great a kindness. Mark the reasons which they gave for desiring his death. " Do you not see," said they, " that every one is running after him ; and that if we take no measure to put a stop to it, our synagogues will be forsaken, and our law denounced ? " The people wished to make him king and waited only for his consent. They followed him in crowds into the wilderness. Never had any one spoken like him ; all hearts, even the

hardest, were touched by his words. See the difference between the two ways of acting. God governed and guided his people with a stern and rigorous hand, and all fled from him. He turned to the path of mildness and all worshipped him. Ah ! will man be senseless enough to believe that he can do what God could not, and that he knows how to govern his fellow-men better than God, the Creator and fathomer of hearts ?

Now let me draw this chapter to an end by the following remarks : True virtue always keeps the right medium. There are certain limits which a virtuous man ought neither to fall short of, nor overstep. The pastor ought to be affectionate, it is true ; he ought to show the love of a father and the tenderness of a mother ; but at the same time he should be careful not to be too free in manifesting by words or actions the feelings of his heart, neither using himself, nor allowing from his subjects too tender caresses, such as might become a source of trouble to silly minds, and silly imaginations ; nor yet too frequently, but only occasionally with innocence and cordial simplicity.

The principal caresses which a pastor should show his subjects is the treating them cordially and mildly, with the heart of a mother and a nurse, and a readiness charitably to serve and assist them according to their wants and necessities, keeping secret whatever each one may say to him, whilst the fondness of subjects for their pastor, should chiefly consist in the entire and perfect confidence which they place in him, in perfectly obeying him and faithfully following his direction.

There is a medium in all things. St. Francis de Sales says, that an imprudent display of kind feelings,

especially in one who governs too mildly would produce the following consequences :—

1. The subjects would become spoiled and unwilling to suffer anything.

2. The pastor would prejudice his own authority and render himself contemptible.

3. He would unconsciously draw the affections of his subjects to himself in such a manner as to wean them from God ; for they would then obey the man whom they love rather than God whom they ought to obey and love in the creature. Consequently, although a pastor ought to be gentle, compassionate, and affectionate, yet his mildness should be so tempered with gravity and modesty that his subjects may not only love, but esteem him. A love which is not accompanied by esteem easily degenerates. What the Bishop of Belley relates of his own love for St. Francis de Sales may often be the case with many inferiors in respect to those pastors who, like the holy Bishop of Geneva, guide and direct with all meekness and love. “I must candidly acknowledge,” says the Bishop of Belley, “that my pleasure was so great if I did anything which pleased him, that when he expressed his satisfaction I thought I was in heaven.” “And,” he adds, “if he had not taught me to refer everything to God as to its last end without thinking of him, many of my works would have been imperfect.” Should a pastor notice a like disposition in any of his subjects, he ought to instil into his heart this doctrine of St. Francis de Sales, endeavoring to lead him by slow degrees to complete detachment and to the esteem of the happiness of a soul which is attached to and depends on God alone. However, in trying to accomplish this, he

must not show himself cold, indifferent and repulsive in his manners, which might easily produce aversions and disquietude, and even a certain derangement, especially in the weak-minded.

Would to God that in all pastors, this virtue of sweetness would seem to clothe itself with the human form, so that they could be said to be gentleness itself rather than simply men endowed with that quality. They would then possess such powerful influence over the minds of men that all would give way to them ; condescending to each one individually and making themselves all things to all, they would see, on the other hand, how each one would acquiesce in their desire which should be no other than to behold every one embarked in the service of God and the way of salvation. “My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men.” (Eccles. iii, 19.)

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MARKS OF A RIGOROUS GOVERNMENT.

It cannot be denied that the greater part of men, even many of the wise, are in a deplorable state of blindness. There is so little self-knowledge that even he whom every one blames for his severity, thinks he is meekness itself. If he is told that by his manner of acting he becomes insupportable and hateful, he taxes every one with impertinence and protests that no one knows him; that he always acts with the greatest mildness and the best intention. Now, this is an error, against which too much cannot be said. Never should we try to cover our faults with the cloak of a good intention. It is true, we ought always to have a good intention in all our actions, but in this instance it is of no avail. We are judged by the exterior, not by the interior. Every one declares that he has a good intention. We are ready to believe this; but we desire to see the fruits. These are kind words and gentle dealings, the only tongues whose evidence is readily accepted. In order that there may be no mistake in the matter, we will here give some marks by which it may be known that a pastor governs his parishioners with severity.

1. When he is too decisive, hasty and cutting in his manner of speaking. When he abruptly gives a refusal; as for instance, when he answers on the spot by a "no," or some other such repulsive word.

2. When pride and displeasure gleam from his eyes, seeming to threaten all who do not accost him with extraordinary humility and trembling speech.

3. When he speaks in a haughty and magisterial tone, making use of peremptory language and playing the despot.

4. When the expression of his countenance is bold and arrogant. It must be acknowledged, however, that such a bearing may sometimes be natural; still, it is scarcely ever blameless, and he who does not endeavor to correct it, will be the cause of many crosses for himself and others.

5. When he gives a refusal without taking the trouble to listen to the petition, and when he contemptuously sends his inferiors away from him.

6. When he not only refuses a lawful request, but accompanies the refusal with sharp and unkind looks. Such treatment is capable of estranging the heart of a poor weak creature. It is no matter of surprise that such a one would rather suffer want than ask anything of so rude and unkind a person.

7. When he appears so unwilling to grant what is asked of him that the petitioner is sorry for having made the request. It is often more agreeable to meet with a polite refusal than to have a favor uncourteously granted.

8. When he decides roughly and hastily upon the representations of his subjects without taking time for consideration or advice, condemning them at the first word and sending them away with their reasons unheard.

9. When he lightly makes use of harsh expressions, such as, "I command you;" "It is my will that it should

be so," "It suffices that it is my wish," "By virtue of holy obedience I command you to do this:" "Where is your obedience?" "Am I not your Superior?" "Go, and let me hear no more of it," "If you do not willingly do what you are told, we must find other means to enforce obedience," "Your strange behavior has long since been a subject of remark," "Mortify yourself and do as you are directed." All this is a proof that a pastor exercises his charge with severity, and is so unmindful of the authority with which he is clothed, that he forgets to be a father, a brother and a servant. A man of a weak mind will make more frequent use of such expressions in a month, than a perfect pastor would in fifty years.

10. When he easily listens to the false reports of such as speak against their brethren and who frequently exaggerate matters; when he credits their representations, and upon the testimony of such witnesses, without further inquiry as to the truth of the matter, gives vent to his zeal by imposing severe penances and uttering bitter reproaches. This hastiness is the cause of many faults. The first is judging a person without hearing him; the second is that an innocent man often suffers unjustly; the third is that the words escaping the lips on such an occasion are unworthy of a pastor, who seems to forget that he is a father, since he ignores that kindness which ought to accompany every action.

11. When at the commission of a slight fault he flies into a passion, as if it had been a mortal sin, although, in all probability, the poor culprit has not even been guilty of a venial transgression. There is no surer mark of weakness than such hasty demeanor. A pastor ought not to be like one whose digestive organs are so disordered

that he is not able to retain anything upon his stomach. He should not let his tongue be moved by everything that falls under his eyes.

12. Other signs of severity in governing are the want of charity and affection of a heart hardened against every kindly feeling ; never to utter a cheerful or pleasant word ; to seem to say by every glance of the eye, “ you ought to mortify yourself,” “ you are too delicate,” “ you alone cause more trouble and annoyance than all the rest,” “ you are too slothful in the practice of virtue, &c.” Such are the genuine characteristics of a severe pastor, of one whose heart is made of stone or iron.

13. Those who enjoy good health, who have never been sick or undergone any hardship, and whose disposition is choleric and melancholy, are generally rude and unkind. Not knowing what sickness, sorrow, misfortune, or ill-health is, they judge others rather rashly and think them over-tender of themselves. Their hearts are too hard to be touched by compassion ; and the most remarkable feature of their case is, that they consider these faults as firmness of mind and the true characteristics of a generous soul. They speak of nothing but of their zeal, thinking there is no better way to exercise it than by enforcing an inviolable observance of their commands. They look upon it as mockery, if any one ventures to quote to them the proverb : *Summum jus, summa injuria*. Justice is the rigor of the law, mildness of expression reconciles us to its necessity.

14. A severe pastor no sooner hears of some single reprehensible act committed by one of his subjects than he believes him at once guilty of the corresponding vice ; he seems to forget that virtuous habits are not extin-

guised by one contrary act ; he seems not to know the distinction between sin and vice. Make but once a remonstrance to him, and he will consider you a disobedient, rebellious subject, who has no respect for his pastor and his orders. Certainly, nothing shows better his want of common sense and experience than this manner of acting.

15. When a severe pastor has once resolved upon a thing, it must be done, *nolens volens* : willingly or unwillingly. We would not infer that it is advisable lightly to change one's purpose ; never, however, should it be too firmly, stubbornly and inexorably adhered to. The consolation of having his petitions at least listened to and taken into consideration should not be denied to a poor inferior. What harm can there be in this ? It will only give him an opportunity to unburden his heart, after which his trouble may disappear of itself.

16. It cannot be denied that there are inferiors who are troublesome, forward, sullen, impudent, unmortified, obstinate and even crafty. We readily admit that severity is called for by such characters ; but it should be exercised so wisely, that those who have not shared in the misdemeanor may not partake of the punishment. It is a great fault to wish to lead all dispositions by the same way,—a fault which ought to be carefully avoided.

Is it not ridiculous to see one who has been pastor for a short time, speak almost like one who has grown gray in governing others ? To show his authority he pulls down what his predecessor has built up, believing his reputation and authority to increase in proportion as he humbles his brethren. Does such a man not give evident signs of a weak mind and must we be astonished to see his subjects revolt against him, trying in every manner

possible to cast off such a hard and insupportable yoke? Let such men become a little older before the direction of others is intrusted to them, in order to learn by experience how to treat their equals with respect and as persons possessing, generally speaking, more merit, virtue and holiness than they themselves. Let them listen to the Holy Ghost, who says: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them out of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee." (Eccl. iv, 35.) Let the principal care of such pastors be to correct their own faulty character by following the foot-steps of those who govern with meekness, the marks of which government we shall, to their greater good, set forth in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MARKS OF A MILD GOVERNMENT.

It is, generally speaking, self-conceit in a man to believe that he is as meek as he ought to be. This very presumption is a sign that he does not know how difficult it is to acquire a perfect degree of the virtue which he imagines himself already to possess. There are but few who reach a high degree of meekness because, generally speaking, the essence of this virtue is not properly understood. We will, therefore, give a few of its characteristics, drawn from the writings of great men.

1. Solomon says, in the Book of Wisdom, that when God commands his servants to do anything, he does so with great attention and respect: "*Cum attentione et reverentia.*" When he determined to send the prophet Isaias to the Jews to announce his judgments, he might have addressed him in the following manner: "I have chosen you as my prophet; I am with you, and I will always be with you; I therefore send you to my people. Go immediately." But such a manner of commanding is far from the Lord. All that he did was simply to manifest to the prophet his wish that he should go. "Whom shall I send," said the Lord to him, "and who shall go for us?" (Isai. vi, 8.)

2. The holy angels act in the same manner. Witness the words of the archangel Raphael to young Tobias: "Brother Tobias, if it please thee, therefore, let us go before". . . . (Tob. xi, 2.) He could have said:

“Quickly ; do this ; God wills it ; there is no time for reasoning, &c.” But this mode of address is unknown in heaven. The angels do not speak in this way.

3. The saints are also unacquainted with this manner of speaking. St. Paul, in writing to Timothy, uses such expressions as the following : “I conjure you by the love of Jesus Christ,” or, “by the love that you bear me ;” or : “I entreat you by the meekness of the Redeemer ;” or : “Do this, I beg of you, for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.” In a similar style does St. Gregory the Great write : “If it pleases your meekness.” “Your benignity will perhaps allow me to tell you.” “I trust that your sincere charity will dictate to you the impropriety of such behavior.” “I believe it will be very agreeable to our Saviour, if your meekness will consider what has occurred in this important matter.” Thus, instead of making his subjects feel the whole weight of his authority, he addressed them in words of flowing honey. By this mild manner of government, he stilled, in the twinkling of an eye, the rising storms and brought back to the faith those who had wandered the farthest, and whose influence might have led to the greatest disorder.

4. The manner in which St. John, the disciple of love, was accustomed to command others may be suitably adduced here. “My dear children,” he said, “if you love Jesus Christ, do what I tell you : I entreat you, by the heart of Jesus, our Master, to love one another sincerely and you will have done all that I ask of you. Love is a good preceptor ; it will instruct you in everything you have to do. Of myself I have nothing to command you, but Jesus wishes this to be ; more I need not say to you.”

5. The example presented by the Holy Family is still more striking. How was it governed? Who commanded there? Jesus Christ? No; he was only an obedient Child. "And he was subject to them; *Erat subditus illis.*" He had come down from heaven, for no other end than to obey. Did our dear Lady command? No; she, who is always "Mother most amiable," was the humble servant of her God and of St. Joseph. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: *ecce ancilla Domini.*" Was it perhaps St. Joseph who commanded? Far from it. This great saint surely was careful not to assume any authority over his God and the Queen of Angels. Who then commanded in this holy household? All three, or rather, none of them. There was such a mutual anticipation of each other's wants, that commanding became unnecessary. Thrice happy family, in which no one commands and every one obeys, or rather where every one commands by doing what duty requires! Example is the most forcible precept. Admire again the spectacle presented by such a family. No one says a word and yet every one does what he ought to do; no one issues orders, and every one punctually obeys! How admirable is the household in which it costs more to command than to act; in which each one is rather a servant than lord and master, and in which meekness and discretion lead and direct.

6. The hermits were accustomed to call St. Macarius "the god of the monks," because his meekness and amiability had gained for him so great an influence over the hearts of his brethren that they did more than he commanded. They even envied one another the pleasure of being able to obey him. "My brethren," he used to say, "do what

you see me do. I will tell you to do nothing which I shall not have first done myself. If you are not able to do it, stay in your cells and rest. I will do it for you. Do you only keep up your courage, and I will be your surety with God." Again, listen to his words to a monk who had disobeyed him: "I know well, my dear brother, that you would willingly have done it, had you been able. You have committed but one slight fault; but I am guilty of so many." Again, he said: "Brother, you and I must do this; you choose the part you prefer, and I will do the rest."

7. A Superior like St. Francis of Assisi is not easily found. He was the General of the Order and yet scarcely ever gave a command. This saint used to say: "My brethren, if you love Jesus Christ, do this, I entreat you." The poor brothers almost killed themselves in the effort to do all that their beloved Father had asked of them. It seemed to them that he did not command them enough, that he spared them too much, and that all they did was, in reality, nothing. When asked by the Guardians of his Order how they ought to direct the religious he answered: "Do as Jesus Christ did. If any one commits a fault, say to him: 'Sin no more.' Tell him that you forgive him most sincerely, admonish him to be more upon his guard for the future, and acknowledge that you commit many faults to his one; nay, that were you not supported by the grace of God, you would be guilty of more and greater ones." If any one reproached him for having been too meek, St. Francis was accustomed to say that he would rather be a father than a hangman, and that if he must hate something, he would hate sin, but not the sinner.

8. Moses, whom we must certainly allow to have been a perfect pastor, once complained to God in the following moving words: "Why wilt Thou have me carry this people in my bosom as a little child or an innocent lamb? Dost Thou not remember that they number more than two millions of souls, that they are a rebellious nation, daily manifesting their faithlessness? How can I bear them all in my bosom?" Still, this complaint did not induce God to change his will. He insisted that Moses should speak to those passionate and indocile men precisely as he would to a child which had cast itself into his arms. Now would it not sound strange to hear any one receive a poor little child, flying to him for protection, with terrible threats and hard blows? "Mosès," said God to the lawgiver, "it is my will that thou lead my people back to their duty and maintain them therein in no other way than by the mildness of paternal affection." What confusion does this bring upon those who, though placed over only a handful of men, make more disturbance in a short time than Moses did in forty years!

9. When the pestilence broke out in Milan, the holy Cardinal St. Charles Borromeo was for a time at a loss what to do to encourage his priests to assist him in serving the pest-stricken people. To command them to do so would have been a critical step; to forsake his disconsolate flock and not trouble himself about them would have been downright cruelty. After considering the matter he hit upon the following expedient. Addressing his clergy, he said: "My children, let him who loves me, follow me." He then immediately repaired to the dwellings of the sufferers, where, without the least regard to his own safety, he bade defiance to death itself. Do you

think it was hard to imitate one who thus courageously exposed his life for the good of others? All of his priests so zealously and fervently followed the example set them by their beloved bishop, that there is little doubt that their generosity in thus exposing their lives, was one of the principal reasons which moved God to stay his avenging arm.

10. It is stated in the Life of St. Peter of Alcantara that he never commanded his inferiors to do anything which he had not himself first done. He wished to know by experience what that was which he required of others. When he gave a command he made use of so kind and gracious words that he seemed rather to be begging a favor than giving an order. When forced to blame any one he did it in the most soothing and affectionate manner. When the Fathers returned from collecting alms he did not wait for them to come to ask his blessing; but hastening to meet them, he would cast himself at their feet, and in this position, after he had blessed them, embrace them with the greatest affection. Then he would express his regret at their fatigue, thank them for their charity, and have something brought for their refreshment. Had they been on a long and tiresome round, he used to embrace them a second time. In the winter he would bring warm water and wash their feet so kindly and fervently as to draw tears from the eyes of his brethren. He labored unceasingly to increase in humility and fraternal charity. He was so earnest in giving them marks of his love that, when he met them on their return from begging alms, he welcomed them as though he had not seen them for years.

A similar example is presented by St. Fidelis of Sig-

maringa, who, whilst he hated himself, loved others with the devotedness of a mother. We may say with truth that the saints, one and all, were distinguished for their exquisite refinement, charity and mildness, no matter whether they earned heaven in a kitchen, like St. Zita, or graced a throne, like St. Margaret of Scotland ; whether they sprang from the most degraded class, like St. Margaret, the penitent of Cortona, or stained the baptismal robe with martyr's blood, like the gentle child, St. Agnes ; whether bred at the plough, like St. Vincent, or in a feudal castle, like the sweet saint of Geneva ; whether they passed their lives in a desert, like the first hermit, or exchanged the sword of a cavalier for the sword of the spirit, like the brave soldier of Loyola ; whether they begged their bread, like St. Labré, or wielded a sceptre, like the last of the crusade kings ; whether, in fine, they offered fair children to martyrdom, like St. Felicitas, or served God in the cloister, like St. Teresa.

11. To know the laws enacted by Jesus Christ for the establishment of his kingdom upon earth, you have but to consider how he instructed his representative. He gave him only one law. "Simon," said he, "if thou lovest me more than all the others love me, be the shepherd of my sheep and remember that, in order to make thyself worthy of the sublime office of my representative on earth, thou must love me and love them for my sake." What did St. Peter do after he had received this office ? He wept oftener than he commanded ; and his tears had a more powerful effect than all the threats of tyrants.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS.

It may be said that the saints, in general, made use of the following maxims in order to govern their subjects with gentle firmness :—

1. Choose for yourself the more difficult task and leave the lighter one to others.

2. Never give a command over-hastily or abruptly.

3. Never command anything when excited, lest passion dictate the order.

4. Never defend obstinately your motives before inferiors ; for bitter contention, not cheerful obedience, would be the result of such a proceeding.

5. Give to a heart oppressed with sorrow, an opportunity to manifest itself and prepare to receive with humility the orders which may be given it.

6. When obliged to refuse a request, do so in such a manner as to show the regret felt at not being able to grant it ; declare to the petitioner that you will profit by the earliest opportunity to oblige him ; protest that it would be a thousand times more agreeable for you to grant than to deny the favor. If the person who proffers the request is not solidly grounded in virtue, give the refusal in a most amiable manner, alleging so satisfactory reasons for it that he will go away better contented than if his desire had been gratified. Say with St. Vincent de Paul : “ Since what you ask cannot now be well granted, I beg you to remind me of it at another time.”

7. When a permission is to be given, grant it kindly, without prefacing it with two or three refusals, or saying "yes" so ungraciously and with so many objections as scarcely to leave the petitioner courage to say a word of thanks.

8. Act with the sincerity of a father's love; then nothing will be hard.

9. Act with the greatest politeness towards inferiors, saluting them first, and never using either in conferences or conversation with them, a haughty tone, harsh, cutting words, or threatening gesticulations.

10. If any one looks as if he were suffering, call him and inquire how he feels.

11. Be not provoked by trifles. It often happens that things of little consequence are treated with a zeal called for only by matters of the greatest importance.

12. Treat your inferiors as persons who are deserving of more esteem than yourself; and who not only rank higher in virtue and merit here on earth, but may also possess in heaven a greater love of God, and a more elevated seat of glory.

13. If, on some occasion, you were wanting in meekness, try at once to repair this fault; ask pardon for it, and endeavor, by kind words, to soothe the heart estranged and wounded by it.

14. When severity becomes a necessity, protest, like St. Francis Xavier, that you would like better to take the discipline than to give it to another.

15. Often consider that, when a sheep has broken its leg, the shepherd does not beat it on that account, but, on the contrary, carefully tries to heal the broken limb, binds it up, takes the poor animal in his arms, and carries it to a safe place.

16. Never reproach any one with the kindness shown him.

17. Be kind to all; let every one see that he is always welcome, no matter how often he calls, and that he may, with perfect confidence, have recourse to his Father in all difficulties and necessities. At whatever hour Father L. Lallement, S.J., was applied to, however occupied he might be, he received every one that came with a smiling countenance and an open heart, and he seemed never to have anything else to do but listen to those who wished to speak to him, without ever betraying in his manner any signs of weariness.

18. A prudential caution and reserve are very much to be recommended; but if excessive, they become injurious, and painfully wound and contract the heart, whilst, on the contrary, an unreserved confidential manner opens and relieves it. Should you notice any one to be wanting in confidence, you must be very careful not to manifest the least coldness or diffidence towards him, but try to gain his heart by kindness and charitable services, always speaking to him with great frankness and holy cordiality. You must also be careful not to be prejudiced against any one, but show the same kindness to all, as otherwise you would do much harm to such a person, who would no longer receive well the corrections of his spiritual Father; for the assurance which a Christian has of sharing in the cordial charity of his pastor, is for the latter the means by which he must make all his instructions and corrections sweetly enter into the heart of the former to the great profit of his soul. If a subject discovers artifice and cunning in the prudence of his director, instead of sincere simplicity, he will keep his heart closed against

him. As the conduct of a director is, so also will be that of his subjects ; if the former is open-hearted, candid and simple in his manner of acting, the latter will be so too. Hence never manifest any resentment or utter any complaint against any one, no matter how much he offended you either in word or action. Never show yourself astonished at being contradicted ; receive everything as coming from the hand of God, and keep your soul in peace and tranquillity.

19. As a general rule, express your esteem for your inferiors, and manifest sometimes satisfaction at their behavior. This is a good means to inspire them with love for dependence and submission, and to make them feel happy under the guidance of their director.

St. Alphonsus writes in one of his letters : “ I entreat each of you when far from me to write to me in all his necessities. Do not yield to the fear inspired by the devil that you disturb me and others, that it is not agreeable to me to speak or correspond with you. I wish you to know, once for all, that the more confidence you show me, the more you win my love and confidence. Let each one be convinced that I will lay aside all else when there is question of consoling one of my brethren ; for it is to me of more importance to assist one of them than to do a good work for any one else. Since God has given me the office I hold, he requires this of me, more than the performance of any other act, however laudable.” In another letter, he writes, “ As Superior I am bound to listen to the least of my brethren and to read the letters he writes to me. This my office demands of me. For the publication of books I am free to use that time only which is left after I have read and answered the letters

written to me. If any one wishes to speak or write to me concerning either his individual affairs or those which relate to the Congregation, I am ready to lay aside everything else. Let all my brethren be convinced that, next to God, each one of them is the only object of my love here upon earth, and that I am ready at any moment to sacrifice my life for each one. They are still young and can therefore effect more for the glory of God than I, an old, sick man can, who is no longer good for anything." On page 208 of the same Letters, he writes: "I will, however, serve you to the best of my power, and God knows how much more dearly I love you all than I do my own mother and brothers." (Letters of St. Alphonsus, Aug. 8, 1754, page 217.)

20. In order to gain the good will and affection of inferiors, which are indispensably necessary for the accomplishment of the good aimed at, a pastor must manifest great love for them and express pleasure at being in their company, guarding, nevertheless, against showing a special inclination for any individual; for this would be the ruin of the best purposes.

"Be firmly convinced," says St. Ignatius, "that any show of preference to one will excite envy and make others think themselves despised. Consequently, be exceedingly careful not to give cause to any to believe that you esteem the learning, talents, or virtue of one more than those of another, except when it is absolutely necessary to do so."

21. When subjects belong to different nations be still more careful not to excite the suspicion of being in the least influenced by the spirit of nationality in the treatment of them. Treat all with charity and indulgence

without manifesting a particular affection for any one, which might give rise to sadness or envy in others.

22. When complained of, avoid showing surprise, sensibility, or displeasure. Express, on the contrary, pleasure at the candor of the complainer; thus you will more easily appease his disquiet and obtain light for the better fulfilment of duty.

“Be careful,” St. Francis de Sales wrote one day to a certain pastor, “not to show yourself discouraged for having been murmured at and complained of by some of your subjects. Nothing is easier than to blame, but it is not so easy to improve. No great talents and skill are required to discover and speak of the faults of those who have to direct others. If we are reproached for faults in our direction, we must bear it patiently, speak to God about them, and consult others also on the matter, and then do what seems best, confidently hoping that God will direct all to his greater glory.”

One day, a woman who was angry with St. Francis de Sales, went to him boldly and told him that she despised and disliked him from her heart. “And I,” said the saint without asking the cause of her dissatisfaction, “love you so much the more.” “How can this be?” asked the woman in surprise. “Because,” was the answer, “you must be very sincere to tell me your temptation, and that is a quality which I highly prize and greatly love.” “But,” answered she, “what I have asserted was not a merely passing feeling; at this moment this dislike is in my heart.” “And what I have said,” replied the saint, “is also my present sentiment, which, with the grace of God, I will ever preserve. . . . I am always glad when any one tells me candidly what is weigh-

ing on his heart ; for when the wound is once discovered, the cure is easy."

23. Do not judge others by yourself, or condemn those who refuse to use those means which have made you advance in virtue. Make it a rule of conduct to avoid forcing personal experience upon others.

24. Guard against overtaking the spiritual strength of any one. Give to those who are well grounded in virtue the more difficult duties, but to the weak, such work only as is proportionate to their strength, so that they may be encouraged to undertake greater things instead of being disheartened.

25. As far as possible, give a favorable interpretation to everything, looking upon all with a father's eye.

26. Be slow in believing bad reports about others ; and when reports are made in an evident state of excitement, require a written statement of the matter, for the pen is more cautious in what it writes than the tongue is in what it speaks.

St. Francis of Assisi says that a pastor ought to be very slow in listening to accusations against others, especially when the accusers are great talkers, and not only ought he not to listen easily to such persons, but he should not believe them until a careful examination shall have proved the truth of their assertions.

27. Be still more cautious in pronouncing judgment against the absent.

"Even though the accuser be a saint," says St. Francis of Assisi, "let the pastor guard against condemning the accused, until he shall have heard what the latter may have to say in his own justification."

"May God," says a great saint, "preserve us from

such pastors as give easy credit to everything, for they will be guilty of many little acts of injustice ; but still more may he preserve us from unjust brethren. The Jews through a spirit of justice would have stoned the poor woman taken in adultery ; but Jesus delivered her through mercy."

28. Never allow an opportunity of gratifying brethren to pass, and express by word and manner the paternal affection you bear them in your heart.

29. "Be not miserly, stingy, too exacting, too liberal," wrote St. Jane Frances de Chantal to a Superioress. "Act in temporal matters generously, equally avoiding meanness and ostentation."

30. Never treat any one with the least sign of pride or anger.

31. In order to lighten the yoke of submission as well as to induce all to love it the more and act with greater perfection, never give a stringent command, except in the most extraordinary cases ; but, even whilst imparting the simplest orders, kindly give the reasons of them, so that whilst obeying, the subjects may feel as if they were doing their own will.

32. Show confidence in the ability of your brethren. Thus you will win their affection.

33. Take an interest in the labors of subjects ; assist them in their undertakings ; employ them whenever the opportunity offers, in works tending to the glory of God and the salvation of souls ; do not wish to do everything yourself, thus hindering by an excess of exterior business the performance of your pastoral duty. Such a manner of acting is very pleasing to inferiors ; and it encourages them to fulfil their duties properly when they

are supported and encouraged by those who hold the place of God towards them.

34. Do not interfere too much with the employment of your brethren. By avoiding this, you will the more calmly and properly perform the duties of your office. Moreover, if the subjects should happen to commit a fault, you may correct them for it. But should you occupy yourself too anxiously with every little trifle, you will assuredly commit faults yourself, and thus expose yourself to the blame of your brethren, the danger of which blame you should avoid as much as possible.

35. When the fruits of the labor of your confreres are spoken of, or when you yourself speak of them, express great joy at them. When any one has accomplished a praiseworthy act, manifest, in every possible manner, gratitude and satisfaction at it, and hold him up as an example for others. In order to please and reward him, do everything that a dutiful son might reasonably expect from the most indulgent of fathers.

36. Be extremely careful not to speak to any one of the faults of another. The consequence of this fault would be that the one to whom the imperfection of another is made known, would say : " If the pastor speaks thus to me of one of my brethren, he will not fail to do the same of me ; therefore I will not open my heart to him or reveal my weakness."

St. Frances de Chantel wrote as follows to deposed Superiors : " My daughters, your kind hearts will doubtless willingly hear of a light which God has vouchsafed to me. It is this : When a Superior is elected, the deposed mother should, by no means, under the plea of confidence, unless in a case of pressing necessity, speak

to her of the past faults of the Sisters. This would only serve to excite distrust and ill-feeling, which would be very wrong. It is my desire that the Sisters too should be equally careful upon this point, and I myself will not speak to the newly elected Superior of the faults committed before her arrival amongst them. Act in this manner, and you will see that the practice of this common charity will draw down upon you the blessing of Heaven. Oh! my dear daughters, the whole perfection of our little Institute depends upon the union of our hearts!"

37. A pastor must repress his aversions and other feelings of dislike, which may arise from ill-humor, or otherwise, in order not to be overhasty in his judgment and fall into a thousand faults.

38. If any one dislikes you, try to find out the cause of his ill-feeling and then abstain from all that might occasion it, and, if possible, even do exactly the contrary to what is displeasing to him and thus win him by mildness.

39. If you have to deal with characters with whom it is very difficult to get along, try to gain them by condescension, and even when you would be justified in insisting upon certain things, yield for the time being, in order to win their souls to Jesus Christ. (St. Francis of Assisi.)

40. Be so kindly disposed towards all, that each one, after the commission of a fault, may fearlessly and unhesitatingly seek a place of refuge in your heart. Be sparing in imparting commands, pardon injuries readily, and be more willing to *bear* with sinners than to *overwhelm* them with reproaches. (St. Francis of Assisi.)

41. Do not give useless directions; for this only

serves to oppress the brethren and make the yoke of Christian life heavier, whereas you should endeavor to lighten it. St. Philip Neri often used to say : " No one can believe how difficult it is to keep rational beings endowed with free will in prompt subordination. It is best effected by kindness and by commanding as seldom as possible. Let him who wishes to be obeyed readily, command but seldom."

42. Consider that a pastor is invested with authority in order that he may benefit and assist inferiors, but not that he may injure or oppress them. St. Bernard says : " In the dignity and office with which you are invested, value nothing so much as the power which it gives you to promote the welfare and happiness of your neighbor. It is no particular happiness to be invested with the power of commanding, but it is a great misfortune not to make yourself useful to others when you command."

43. Be not too prompt to promise this and that, or to satisfy fault-finding spirits, but take time enough to consider, if there is question about something of importance ; thus many annoyances will be avoided.

44. Do not wait until requested, before relieving the wants of any one, but inquire into them and anticipate them. This manner of acting makes benefits and acts of charity twice as dear and valuable. There are certain bashful characters, who like better to suffer want than to have the appearance of being troublesome ; there are others who from a spirit of penance, conceal even their most necessary wants ; others again from a spirit of pride and self-conceit, will do without the charity of their neighbor, or relieve their wants by unlawful means rather than ask for it. An attentive and

anticipating charity prevents all these evils. One day the Abbot Elias of Isauria asked in a letter of St. Gregory the Great, to send him some Gospel-books and fifty dollars for the wants of his convent ; but, believing that he had asked too much, he asked in the course of his letter, for forty dollars only ; and reflecting that perhaps even this sum might be too great, on account of the many claims of charity which the Pope had to meet, he changed this petition also, asking only for thirty dollars. In answer to this letter the Pope wrote as follows : — “ We send you herewith the Gospel-books ; and as to the fifty dollars which you asked for the wants of your convent, you thought that this sum was too much, and you took off ten dollars ; and believing that this sum was still too much, you took off again ten dollars, asking only for thirty. Now as *you* were so generous, *we* must not be less so. Therefore, we send you herewith fifty dollars, and being afraid that this sum might not be sufficient for your wants, we send ten dollars more ; and being still apprehensive, that even this sum might not meet your wants, we have added twelve more. We thank you for the great affection and the great confidence which *you* show us.” (Rohrbacher’s *Histoire Univer. del, Eglise.*)

Father Tannoja relates, that St. Alphonsus constantly sought to impress upon the minds of Superiors to be kind and affectionate to their inferiors, that they should not employ severity and penances, but that they should rather prefer the method of gentle and affectionate encouragement. The most affectionate father could not feel greater love for his children than St. Alphonsus did for his brethren.

To two Fathers of the Society of Jesus, who had just

been promoted to important positions, St. Francis Xavier wrote as follows : " Above all things I recommend to you charity, first to each other and then towards all the Fathers and Brothers. The knowledge which I have of the members of our Order gives me so great a confidence in them, that I do not believe they need a Superior. Nevertheless, for the sake of greater merit and that all may go on with order, Father A. Gomez will take charge of the college at Goa and you will be the Superior of the other houses in the province. Once more does my sense of duty compel me to recommend to you mutual love. Do not meddle with each other's duties. Cherish all the Fathers and Brothers with particular affection, assist them in their difficulties, as far as is possible for you, taking to heart all their troubles as if they were your own. Try, therefore, when they ask anything of you, either for themselves or for their converts, whether for spiritual or temporal necessities, to comply with their request. The letters you write to those who are far from you, ought to be exceedingly kind and affectionate. Be particularly careful not to let a word escape your pen, either through haste or negligence, which might grieve or discourage them. Think of the great sufferings they are obliged to undergo in the service of Jesus Christ, those especially who are in the Molucca Islands ; for they indeed have to carry the cross. Towards those, who visit you occasionally, either when they come of themselves or when they are sent by the Superiors for the good of their souls, act with great respect and make use of the proper means to restore or strengthen their zeal. I beg you to read this note once every week."

45. If a pastor thus proves himself a mild and affectionate Father to his subjects, they, on their part, will always act towards him like obedient children, placing the fullest confidence in him, so that he may do with them whatever he wishes. If his love for them is such that he is rather their servant than their pastor, they, in their turn, will never think of themselves or concern themselves about their health, but relying upon his fatherly care, will spare themselves no fatigue in labor, feeling sure that they will be amply relieved when necessity calls for it. This entire confidence of the subjects in their Superior or pastor will give rise to a holy emulation; every one will do more than his strength sanctions, and show his respectful obedience in proportion to the love and solicitude of his Father.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CORRECTION.

It is related of the great Venetian artist, Antonio Canova, that he gladly accepted criticism from the ignorant as well as from the learned. Even when he was quite old and recognized as the best sculptor of the age, it happened one day that some laborers were employed to remove a beautiful group that he had just finished. One of the laborers looked at one of the statues, shrugged his shoulders and said: "That statue looks to me as if it had the goitre." At this remark the pupils of Canova, who were in the studio, sprang up in a rage and loaded the poor laborer with abuse. Canova rushed in, and on learning the cause of the uproar, glanced quickly at the marble. "Bravo!" he cried after a moment's pause. "You are right. Take this watch. And as he spoke, he threw the chain around the laborer's neck. You deserve it. You have done me a great service. He then took a chisel and began immediately to retouch the statue.

It is very difficult to administer correction aright. It demands extraordinary prudence, experience, charity and firmness of will, because there are but few persons who take correction so well as Canova took it.

Upon this subject St. Vincent de Paul said:—

"1. Good example must precede it, otherwise it may justly be said: Physician, cure thyself.

"2. Patience must defer it, because, being a disagree-

able remedy, it should be used, generally speaking, only when every other means has proved useless.

“3. It must be applied with charity lest, while healing one wound, others might be inflicted.

“4. Humility must accompany it, accusing ourselves and assuming a part of the disgrace of him whose weakness we have discovered.

“5. But we ought to be particularly careful to administer reproof in so mild a manner as to lessen the bitterness of this remedy to which nature is radically averse, thus rendering it so efficacious as to make it strike at the very root of the evil.”

6. According to St. Ignatius, in the punishment to be given, attention must be paid to the nature of the fault, its consequences, and to the progress in virtue of the delinquent.

7. It is sometimes good and advisable, before reproving or punishing a person, to point out to him the nature and magnitude of his fault, and then propose to him to impose for it a penance upon himself. If he takes upon himself a very severe penance, it is well to lessen it.

8. In reproving or punishing any one for a fault, there should not be the least sign of excitement. “A physician who is suffering under delirium or any other violent disorder,” says Father Crasset, S. J., “should be first healed himself before he attempts to prescribe remedies for others. A father who corrects a child when he is under the effects of passion, deserves greater chastisement than the culprit whom he punishes.”

9. In general, unless prudence requires it otherwise, the Superior should first kindly and affectionately ad-

monish the delinquent; then in a friendly manner endeavor to inspire him with confusion for his fault; in a word, the Superior should act so that fear of chastisement may not drive love and confidence from the heart of the offender; otherwise he will cause the fault rather to increase than to be remedied.

10. If a correction is to be given to persons whose dignity must be particularly respected, to priests, for example, it is well to include one's self in the correction, speaking in the first person of the plural number, according to the manner of St. Gregory when addressing his clergy: "How much do we offend God, my beloved brethren, if we ourselves commit sin, who should prevent others from sinning. We do not seek the salvation of souls, we seek only our own comforts, the praises and honors of men; we give up the cause of God for the sake of earthly occupations; we live in the sanctuary of the Lord, and love but what is transitory." (Hom. in Luc. x.)

11. We read of St. Francis of Assisi that the burning zeal which led him to watch so carefully over the perfection of his brethren, was united to the greatest affection. He always spoke to them kindly and mildly. When he was obliged to censure anything, he acted rather as a father than a judge. He spoke without anger or excitement; nay, even without raising the tone of his voice, thus manifesting his magnanimity of soul and peace of heart. The Apostolical power and the paternal kindness with which he was endowed, so won the love and reverence of his children that they always obeyed him punctually and even anticipated his wishes. He gave the following beautiful maxims to the Guardians of his Order for their guidance in the correction of others:

“Be surgeons, but not torturers. Correct the faults of your subjects with the mildness of a father, and let not your admonitions be given with the harshness of an enemy.

“Perfection in directing others consists in these five words: watch, love, bear with them and nourish them with the sweet doctrine of Jesus Christ, whom the Holy Scripture represents under the figure of a lamb.

“A perfect pastor is an enemy to all transgressions, but he is a physician to the transgressors; he watches over them and seeks means to restore their souls to vigorous health.

“Guard against listening willingly to those great talkers, who are so quick in observing and reporting the faults of others. They themselves are generally the most guilty, and it is one of their secret artifices to direct the eyes of the pastor to the faults of their neighbor, in order to turn them away from their own.

“A good Superior never pronounces sentence against any one without giving him a hearing, even though his accuser be a saint. If he acts otherwise he will expose himself to the danger of committing irremediable faults.

“I have resigned the office of General, because I desire to correct my children by no other means than that of my example and the efficacious mildness of my exhortations. I have no desire to torment them, like the people in the world, who take pleasure in punishing others with severity.

“A perfect Superior detests the faults of his brethren, but, as far as possible, he loves those who are guilty of them. He will at least, by his kindness, try to win and convert them.

“When any one commits a fault, it is my desire that the Guardian, if he loves God sincerely and as a true son aspires to imitate him, be satisfied with saying: ‘My child, you have done wrong; do not act so again.’”

12. St. Vincent de Paul made use of the following rules of prudence in administering reproof:

“He reproved no one on the spot for his faults; he was accustomed to say that medicine should not be given to the sick when their fever is high except in extraordinary cases. He, therefore, took time to consider the affair before God and to decide upon the best and most useful manner of making the correction, especially when the fault was of a serious nature, and the offender of a hasty temperament. Then, when a favorable moment presented itself, he would, with all humility and confidence, ask the guilty person if he, although himself full of faults and imperfections, might not take the liberty of giving him a friendly admonition.

“In order to gain the affection of the offender, he first modestly praised his good qualities; then, with the greatest delicacy, he placed before his eyes his fault, reminded him of its unhappy consequences, and proposed the proper remedy for it. To this he not unfrequently added, that the remedy was one which he himself was obliged to make use of to correct his own faults.

“He never revealed the person who had reported the fault to him. Nay, when he had reason to fear that the guilty person might easily suspect the informer and conceive a dislike for him, he made no reproof at all, because he believed that peace and union in a Community ought to be preferred to everything else.

“He always concluded a reproof with some encourag-

ing words, saying that God allowed such faults in order to humble us and to increase our diligence in acquiring virtue.

“ Now and then he used to feign not having observed the fault at all.

“ At other times he would but slightly refer to it, as he did on one occasion to a Superior who had repeatedly neglected his orders : ‘ Your delay,’ said he, ‘ has almost the shade of disobedience.’

“ We must be careful said he, to watch for a favorable time to admonish the delinquent ; then we must give the admonition kindly and courteously. The second time we may display a little severity and seriousness, but even this should be softened by meekness, and a proper remedy should at once be proposed. The third time the most zealous and energetic language should be used ; and the offender should be informed that the most severe remedy will be applied if the fault is not corrected.

“ Under certain circumstances he gave the admonition publicly without naming the guilty person. ‘ This should be done,’ he said :

“ (a) When the evil is deeply rooted, and it would consequently not be advisable to admonish individuals in private ;

“ (b) When the offender has a good heart, but is too weak to take the reproof well ;

“ (c) When it is to be feared that others might commit the same fault, if the warning is not given in public. Excepting these cases, fraternal correction ought always to be given in private.”

13. “ If necessity obliges us to correct our neighbor,” says St. Augustine, “ we should carefully examine :

“(a) Whether it be for such a fault as we have never committed ourselves. In this case we should be mindful that we are men and might have committed the same.

“(b) If we ever committed the same fault, but have succeeded in ridding ourselves of it, we should remember our common weakness, in order that our correction may not be preceded by passion, but by charity.

“(c) If we are guilty of the same fault, for which we want to reprove our neighbor, we should let the correction alone; we should be very sorry for our fault, and try not to commit it again and induce our neighbor to imitate our example.” (Lib. 2. de serm. Domini in monte. c. 20.)

14. “In correcting the aged,” says St. Alphonsus, “you must have recourse to sweet entreaties.”

“The aged,” says St. Francis de Sales, “cannot be so easily managed; they are not so flexible; for the sinews of the soul as well as of the body have grown stiff.” Hence to reprove them by way of entreaty is the best for them.

15. “To reprove any one,” says St. Alphonsus, “is a kind act of charity, but if it is done unkindly, it rather injures than benefits.” (Life, Vol. II. p. 216.)

“The truth should always be spoken graciously,” St. Francis de Sales used to say; “a bitter zeal is productive of no good. Reproof is a species of food which is always difficult to digest. Fraternal charity should, therefore, so sweeten it as to destroy its bitterness, else it will be like those fruits which cause pain in the bowels. Charity does not seek its own advantage, but the honor of God. Bitterness and severity proceed only from passion, vanity and pride. An untimely use of a good remedy turns it into a deadly poison.”

For this reason, our Lord said to St. Gertrude: "There are many who too severely blame and reprove the imperfect and sinners; instead of remedying the evil, they rather increase it by their impatience; and by blindly following the impulse of their own will without caring whether they scandalize my elect or not, they pierce my hands with red-hot awls. May some at least learn from my example how to remedy the faults of their fellow-men; let them by mild and kind remonstrances try to induce them to forsake their imperfect habits, before they have recourse to more energetic means."

Hence St. Augustine says: "Never correct any one unless your conscience tells you in truth that you are induced by the pure motive of charity to give the admonition."

We read in several chapters of the lives of the Fathers of the Desert that if the elder ones reprimanded with too much severity those of their disciples who were laboring under temptations, they soon after fell themselves into the same temptations. The Lord permitted this, that they might learn how to have compassion on the tempted. "*Considerans te ipsum, ne et tu tenteris.*" (Galat. 6, 1.) Not to show compassion on the infirmities of our neighbor, but to judge and condemn him unmercifully when he has committed a fault, is a sign of some hidden vice and imperfection. "An evident proof," says Cassian, "that you are not yet purified of the filth of sin is if you have no compassion on those who have committed faults, but pronounce a rigid sentence of condemnation upon them; for how could perfection have entered your heart which has not as yet acquired what the Apostle considers the perfection of the law, saying: "Bear ye one another's

burdens and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal. vi, 2.) Nay, you have not as yet reached even that degree of charity of which the same Apostle says : " Charity is not provoked to anger, is not puffed up, thinketh no evil, it beareth all things, endureth all things, believeth all things." (I. Cor.) " For the just regardeth the lives of his beasts, but the bowels of the wicked are cruel." (Prov. xii, 10.) Hence it is an evident proof that you are guilty of the same fault for which you censure your neighbor without indulgent charity and with inhuman severity. (Col. xi, 11.)

But how shall we be able to recognize whether the correction we give proceeds from charity ? The reply to this question is given by St. Francis de Sales: " Truth proceeds from charity," says he, " when we speak it only from the love of God and for the good of him whom we reprove. It is better to be silent than to speak a truth ungraciously ; for this would be to present a good dish badly cooked, or to administer medicine unseasonably. But is this not to detain truth a prisoner unjustly ? Certainly not ; to act otherwise would be to bring it forth unjustly, because the real justice of truth and the truth of justice, reside in charity. The truth which is not charitable proceeds from a charity which is not true. A judicious silence is always preferable to an uncharitable truth."

16. " May God preserve you," says St. Alphonsus, " from ever seeking revenge against one who has opposed or contradicted you, or who has spoken disrespectfully of you during the time you have been in office ; guard, I say, against giving him any pain or humiliation on that account ; this would cause very great scandal. You should rather, whenever it can be done without scruple,

endeavor to treat with particular respect and attention, any one who may have opposed you. Thus you will please God and give great edification to every one."

17. Finally, before giving a reprimand, always recommend yourself to our Lord, humbling yourself in his presence by acknowledging that you are more faulty, and consequently, more blamable and deserving of punishment than your brother. This lesson was given by our Lord to St. Magdalene de Pazzi

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

EXAMPLES IN ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID.

1. One day St. Vincent de Paul was told that one of his priests was too inactive during the missions and that severity towards the people prevailed over charity in his sermons. So he wrote to him as follows: "I write to you, dear sir, to obtain your news and to communicate ours to you. How do you feel after your great fatigue? How many missions have you given? Do the people seem disposed to profit by your labors? Do these labors produce the desired fruit? It would be a great consolation for me to be informed in detail of all you have done. From other houses of the Congregation I have received good accounts, thanks be to God! Their labors are to their great content blessed with happy results. The strength which God has given to Mr. N. is truly wonderful. For nine months he has been laboring in the country, and his missions, according to the testimony of the Vicar-General, the religious of the place and others have done incalculable good. This result is ascribed solely to the mildness and charity with which this gentleman seeks to win the hearts of these poor people. This induces me to recommend more earnestly than ever the practice of these virtues. If God deigned to bless our first missions, it was evidently on account of the kindness, humility and sincerity with which we treated every one. Yes, if God deigned to make use of the most miserable among us, that is of myself to convert

sinners and heretics, it was, as they themselves unanimously admitted, in consequence of the patience and benevolence with which I constantly acted towards them. Even the galley-slaves were won in this manner. When I dealt severely with them, all my efforts were vain, whilst, on the contrary, when I pitied them, praised their resignation, kissed their chains, sympathized with them in their misfortune, or told them that their sufferings were their purgatory in this life, they listened to me and took the necessary means to save their souls. I beg you, therefore, my dear sir, to help me to thank God earnestly for these favors and to beg of him to bestow the grace upon all our missionaries to act towards every one, privately and publicly, even towards the most hardened sinners, with meekness, charity and humility and never to make use of wounding words, or bitter reproaches, or preach severe sermons. I doubt not, sir, that as far as you are concerned, you will carefully avoid a manner of acting, which is so exceedingly unbecoming a physician of souls, and which instead of winning hearts and leading them to God, only estranges and embitters them. Christ, our Lord, is the eternal delight of both angels and men. We must also try to be the delight of our fellow-creatures so as to lead them to their eternal happiness."

Thus St. Vincent knew how to draw the attention of his priests to their faults and imperfections without wounding their feelings. He excused them as far as he could, manifested his love and esteem for them, and reproved so modestly and humbly that none ever felt abashed or discouraged, but, on the contrary, all were edified and encouraged by his very reproofs.

2. To the Superior of one of his houses, who greatly

exaggerated the difficulties of his office, Vincent gave the following answer: "What you write to me is both true and not true. It is true in respect to those who do not like to be contradicted by any one; who wish everything to be conducted according to their opinion and will; who desire to be obeyed by all without opposition or delay, and who would like to see their every command approved of. What you write is not true, however, in regard to those who consider themselves the servants of others, and who, whilst they perform the duties of Superior, keep constantly in mind their model, Jesus Christ, who bore with the rudeness, jealousy, want of faith, and other faults of his disciples, and who said that he had come into the world not to be served, but to serve. You used formerly to go through your duties patiently, humbly, and cheerfully, and I know well that your only design now in using these exaggerated expressions is to explain your difficulties better and to induce me to remove you from your post of Superior."

3. It was, however, by no means the opinion of St. Vincent, that Superiors should connive at everything in their subjects. He wished that the guilty should always be reprimanded and even punished; insisting, nevertheless, upon the reproof being given in the spirit of meekness and in accordance with the above quoted principles.

He was once told that one of his priests, a very zealous man, who at that time was the Superior of a seminary, treated the seminarians too harshly. In a letter to this priest he reproves him in the following manner: "I believe all that you have written, quite as readily as if I had seen it with my own eyes, and I have too many proofs of your zeal for the good of the seminary to doubt your

words. For this very reason I have withheld my judgment in regard to the complaints which have reached me of your severe government until I should have learned from yourself the true state of things. In the meanwhile I beg of you to reflect seriously upon the manner in which you act, and to resolve to correct, with the help of God's grace, whatever may be displeasing to him in your conduct. Although your intention may be good, yet the divine Majesty is offended, and the following are a few of the evil consequences of such conduct.

“First, the seminarians leave the house dissatisfied ; virtue becomes distasteful to them ; the consequence of which is that they may fall into sin and ruin their souls ; and this, merely because they were by your severity too soon forced out of the school of piety. Secondly, they talk against the seminary and thus prevent others from going to it, who otherwise would have come to receive the instructions and graces necessary for their vocation. Thirdly, the bad reputation of one house easily reflects upon all the others of the society, paralyzing the members thereof in their ministry ; so much so that the good which the Lord, until now, has deigned to perform by their instrumentality, immediately commences to diminish more and more. To say that heretofore you have not noticed these faults in your own person, betrays, no doubt, a want of humility on your part. For were you possessed of that degree of humility which Jesus Christ requires of missionary priests, you would not hesitate for a moment to believe that you were the most imperfect of all and guilty of all these things. You would attribute to a hidden blindness your not noticing in yourself those defects which are so easily discovered by others and for which

you have already been reprimanded. I have learned that you do not like correction. Should this be so, oh! how much should you fear for yourself! How far does your virtue fall short of that of the saints who annihilated themselves before the world and were rejoiced at seeing their little failings made known to others. Are we not to imitate Jesus Christ, who notwithstanding his innocence, suffered the bitterest and most unjust reproaches, without even opening his mouth to avert the disgrace from his sacred Person? My dear sir, let us learn from him to be meek and humble of heart. These are virtues which you and I must continually ask of him, and to which we must always attend, in order not to be drawn away by the opposite passions which make us destroy with one hand what we have built up with the other. May God enlighten us with his Holy Spirit to discover our blindness and to submit to those whom he has given us for guides."

To the Superior of a mission-house he wrote as follows: "God be praised that you went yourself to do what Mr. N. refused to do. It was very good that you preferred doing this rather than insisting any longer upon obedience to your command. There are some people who, although devout and pious, having a great horror for sin, will still from time to time commit some faults through human frailty; we must bear with them, and not excite them still more. As God otherwise blesses this gentleman in the confessional, I think we ought to connive a little at his caprices, so much the more as they are of no serious nature. With regard to the other priest of whom you write, I hope that this word has escaped him from want of reflection rather than from real mal-

ice. Even the most discreet when surprised by passion may say something of which they soon after repent. Finally, there are men who show aversion to persons as well as to offices, but who still do much good. Alas ! it cannot be otherwise ; live with whom you please, you will still have something to suffer as well as something to merit. I hope that he, of whom I speak, will still be gained, if we use towards him charitable forbearance and kind corrections. Do pray for him, as I unceasingly do for your whole community."

To another Superior he wrote : "The priest of whom you make this report is a pious man ; he practises virtue, and before he entered our congregation he enjoyed a great reputation in the world. If he now manifests a restless spirit, meddling with temporal affairs and those of his family, and thus becomes a subject of annoyance to his brethren in religion, he must be borne with in meekness. If he had not this fault, he would have another ; and if you had nothing to suffer, you would have no occasion to practise charity. Your Superiorship would, moreover, bear little resemblance to that of our divine Redeemer who chose for himself imperfect and uneducated disciples, both to manifest his charity and patience and to give an example to those who have to direct others. I beseech you, my dear sir, to imitate this divine Model. From him you will learn not only how to bear with your brethren, but also how to treat them, in order to free them more and more from their defects. Certainly, on the one hand, we must not allow, through human interest, evils to increase or to take deeper root, but, on the other hand, we must try to remedy them by degrees and in a charitable manner."

To a priest who was in company with another on a distant mission, he wrote thus : “ I hope that the goodness of God will bless your efforts, especially if charity and patience reign between you and your assistant. I beseech you in the name of the Lord to see that this be your principal care, because you are the elder and consequently the Superior ; bear, therefore, in patience whatever you may have to suffer on the part of your companion. Bear all, I say, so as interiorly to renounce your authority and to be guided only by the spirit of charity. By this means Jesus Christ gained his Apostles and corrected them of their faults. You also will gain this good priest only by this means. Have then a little regard for his character ; do not contradict him at the first moment, though you believe you have reason for so doing, but wait awhile and then give him a charitable remonstrance. Above all, take great care not to let any one perceive the least difficulty between you and him, for you are exposed to the observation of all, and one single unkind look on your part, if noticed by the people, would make so bad an impression upon them as to paralyze all your labors. I hope you will follow my advice.”

If all these admonitions and reproofs were, or seemed to be, of no avail, still Vincent did not lose courage, but continued to bear patiently, to pray, and to hope that God would in the end show mercy to these strayed sheep. This perseverance he also recommended to others. When Superiors of the different houses requested him to send such and such a priest to another house, he recommended patience to them, reminding them of the common lot of all men to have faults. If any of his subjects acted otherwise than he had told him, he would say only :

“Sir, had you followed my advice, you would have succeeded better in your undertaking.” Sometimes he would not say anything at all.

4. St. Francis de Sales was one evening visited by a nobleman. His servant forgot to put lights in the house, and in the room of the prelate, so that the bishop was obliged to accompany the stranger to the gate in the dark. The only reproof which the saint made to the servant consisted in this: “Do you know, my dear friend, that two little pieces of candle would have been of greater value to us to-day than ten dollars?” Once one of the servants of St. Francis de Sales returned home rather late at night being quite intoxicated. He knocked at the door, but no one answered, all having gone to sleep. The saint, who alone was still awake, went to open the door, and seeing that his servant was intoxicated to such a degree as not to be able to walk, he took him by the arm and conducted him to his bed-room; there after having undressed him and taken off his shoes and stockings, he laid him on his bed, covered him well and retired. The saint on meeting him alone next morning, said to him: “Oh! my dear friend, you were, no doubt, very sick last night.” On hearing this the servant fell on his knees, and bathed in tears, begged the prelate’s pardon. The holy bishop touched by his sorrow, gave him, though a severe, yet a paternal reproof; he reminded him of the danger to which he exposed himself of losing his soul, and imposed upon him the penance of mixing a certain quantity of water with his wine at table. The culprit accepted the penance, and was, from that time, so faithful that he never again committed a similar fault.

5. One day Cardinal Cheverus learned that a parish

priest was at open warfare with his parish. He went to the place with the view of re-establishing peace. The pastor in question was a man of irreproachable life and ardent zeal, but of an excitable disposition which sometimes hurried him beyond all bounds. It was from this defect that the dispute originated. A child had been brought to him for baptism whose god-mother had neglected to make her easter-communion. Adhering rigidly to ancient regulations, he would not permit her to stand sponsor, which so exasperated the parents that they refused to seek a substitute, preferring to leave their infant unbaptized. On his arrival M. de Cheverus begged the pastor to withdraw his opposition ; but in vain. The Cardinal then directed one of the priests who accompanied him to perform the ceremony, in order that the poor child might no longer remain the victim of a quarrel. Irritated at this beyond all self-control, the pastor gave the most insulting language to his archbishop. The meek prelate opposed nothing but silence and calmness to the storm. He repaired to the church, where he ascended the pulpit and invited all the parishioners to peace and union with their parish priest, on whom he pronounced an elaborate eulogium, detailing all the good qualities of which he was possessed. " You have," he said, " but one complaint to make of him ; he has, you say, a hasty and violent temper ; alas ! my friends, who is without defects ? If I were to remain twenty-four hours among you, you would perhaps discover so many faults in me, that you would not be able to tolerate me : you see but one in your pastor ; forgive then that single fault in consideration of so many virtues." Having finished his discourse the Cardinal went to the sacristy, where he found the priest abashed and ashamed,

and embracing him with the utmost kindness, he said : “ My dear friend, I love you with my whole heart ; how shall we begin the service ? ” seeking by this means to do away with the recollection of the offence which had been committed, and prove his condescension in regard to everything which was not inimical to his duty. The service over, the Cardinal called upon those of the parishioners who were the most embittered against the pastor, and spoke to them so impressively, that they declared themselves ready to do whatever he wished. The reconciliation was forthwith accomplished ; the kiss of peace was given ; all sat down to the same table, and every heart was united in that of the archbishop. Thus did he everywhere spread the dominion of charity, and illustrate by his example the words of the Apostle : “ Charity is sweet and patient, not hasty to anger, but pardoneth and suffereth much.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, A MODEL PASTOR AND SUPERIOR.

It would be difficult to find a better model and one easier to imitate than St. Francis de Sales. It seemed to him, as he said on one occasion, that God only truly loved poor sinners and knew how to compassionate and forbear with them in all their infirmities. To him may be fitly applied what St. John tells us in the Apocalypse, namely: that he saw an immense multitude of men having a lamb sitting among them, which guided them with such great ease, that there appeared something divine in it. Now, the holy Bishop of Geneva was so meek and amiable, that every one obeyed him with that ready obedience which would be given to a seraph. It may be said, that, as he neither refused nor commanded anything, his people tried to anticipate his wishes, and never asked a favor of him which he could not conscientiously grant. The government of his diocese was no burden to him. He had time to write books, to found a religious Order, to reform others, to keep up a correspondence with thousands, to preach twice a day, to speak with every one; yet all this he did so quietly, that it seemed as if he had nothing to do. So true it is that meekness can accomplish all things.

1. He used to say pleasantly, that all things were possible to him, that he could do whatever he wanted; because he wished nothing but what God willed, he expected nothing from men but what their weakness allow-

ed them to do. If they could not comply with his desires in a day, they would be able to do so in a month, or, at least, in a year, and he must wait for them.

2. If a religious was praised in his presence for being very mild and virtuous, he asked whether he had ever held an office or was, at the time, burdened with one; "for," said he, "many practise virtue, as long as they have nothing to do and have no burden but their own to carry. To speak in strict accordance with truth, this in many, is not so much a virtue as a desire to avoid detection and ridicule. But, if a religious is put to the trial, if he has an office which obliges him to guide and endure others; then it will be seen, whether he possesses virtue,—true charity to bear the weakness of his inferiors, real humility to suffer contempt, prudence to wait for a favorable time to do what duty requires, and to suppress that false and perverse zeal which is nothing else than masked impatience. This is the test of true virtue, otherwise, I have very little confidence in it, for I often perceive that an inert disposition is looked upon as virtue. I am amused at those who are always ready to give advice, but who do not know how to follow it."

3. One day he was accused of having yielded to anger. He answered: "I am, it is true, a miserable creature and subject to passion; but, by the grace of God, since I was consecrated bishop, never have I said an angry word to my people."

The meekness of St. Francis de Sales was not, however, that false meekness practised by worldlings through politeness, which consists in a few gracious words and actions. It was that genuine meekness that proceeds from the heart and is, as it were, the flower of love, which fills the

soul with tenderness, condescension, and compassion, and manifests itself exteriorly by a graciousness of manner and wisely-tempered demeanor,—the fruit of a holy affection. Nor was his meekness that bashful and awkward reserve which sometimes passes for virtue. Much less did it partake of the nature of that apathetic indifference, which is disturbed at nothing, because it feels nothing ; which hates nothing, because it loves nothing, and which always yields, because everything is alike to it. His meekness was full of life, but, at the same time, serious and discreet. It seldom descended to caressing marks of affection ; “for,” said he, “we must not be lavish of such things, or make use of sweet words on every occasion, bestowing them in profusion upon the first one we meet.” In a word, his meekness was characterized by nobleness, dignity, and majesty, producing, upon those who were brought in communication with him, an effect in which piety, love and reverence were equally blended. This virtue was exteriorly manifested by the serenity of his countenance, the affability of his manners, the graciousness and mildness of his words, which made everything he said agreeable.

4. “My lord,” said some one to him, “you go too often to Geneva, to see that old fool of a Beza, who is so ill-disposed to listen to your conferences. Indeed, to speak plainly, your condescending and friendly manner towards him, scandalizes us. Why do you not use this time for other business of the diocese, of which you are now the Provost, and will some of these days be the bishop? Why do you not rather spend your leisure in conversing with so many good souls, to whom you would certainly do more good?”

“ Ah ! ” was the answer, “ do you not remember, that Jesus Christ, our Master, said he had come into the world not so much for the just, as for the sinners ? If, therefore, in imitation of our Saviour, we ought to seek after those who are the most deeply immersed in error, why should I not do for Beza and all like him, everything that a minister of the Gospel can do in this world ? He is a wandering sheep : ought I not to snatch him from the jaws of the wolf and bring him back to the fold ? I would rather renounce every other dignity, though a thousand were offered me, than give up the care of the salvation of sinners and the honor of bearing with their weakness and imperfection.”

5. “ But, my Lord, you are entirely too kind and forbearing : the wicked abuse your goodness and in all probability ridicule it. The very worst seem to be the most welcome with you. You embrace them as if they were your dearest children ; and yet you very well know how bad they are.” “ Ah ! ” exclaimed he, “ how agreeable it is to be blamed for being too meek ! Why does God the Father allow himself to be called the God of mercy ? Why did the Word made Flesh assume the name of a meek Lamb, and why did the Holy Ghost appear in the shape of a dove, the symbol of meekness ? Had there been anything better than this divine virtue, surely Jesus Christ would have taught it ; and yet he recommends only two points to us. ‘ Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart.’ Would you, then, hinder me from imitating in the most perfect manner, a virtue so highly esteemed and taught by God himself ? Do you think that we are wiser than God ? ”

6. “ It seems to me,” said he, “ that I love nothing

but God and the souls of men, for God's sake. All that is not God or for God is nothing to me. O, when will we see our fellow-creatures in our Saviour's heart? He who considers them in any other light, runs the risk of not loving with a pure, constant and unvarying love. But in this divine heart, who could not love his neighbor? Who would not be willing to bear with him, to put up with his imperfections? Who would become tired of him or find him a burden?" To help and serve his fellow-men was the holy bishop's constant occupation. "It has pleased God," he used to say, "to mould my heart in this manner. Oh! yes, I desire to love my dear neighbor so very, very much! O, when will our hearts be overflowing with meekness and love for our fellow-men? To them I have devoted my body and every pulsation of my heart, so that they may make use of them according to their wants."

7. "I feel so great a joy in loving my enemies," he once said, "that were God to forbid me to do so, it would be hard for me to obey him." As the greater number of the persons who claimed his kindness and attention, were of the female sex, his former preceptor, the Abbé Déage, warned him that such frequent visits from women would prove injurious to him, that it would give room for malicious tongues to talk, &c. To this the holy bishop answered: "God, who is charity itself, has given me an office which calls for the practice of this virtue. In it I am the debtor of all, but particularly of the weak and infirm. My Saviour knows that his love alone influences my every action. So long as I keep close to him, his Almighty hand will uphold me. A reed in God's hand becomes a pillar of the temple."

On another occasion, Mr. Déage remarked to him that he could not understand why the women ran after him so much, since he did not say much to them. "Ah!" replied the holy bishop with a smile, "do you think it nothing, then, to let them talk. Ears to listen to them are needed more than a mouth to speak to them."

"We ought," said he, "to listen quite as willingly to persons of low condition, and be as ready to help them in their difficulties as in the case of the rich. If a soul is troubled only about a trifle, we ought nevertheless to try to comfort it. The little troubles of poor people are great troubles to them; and, besides, it is no insignificant matter to console a soul redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ."

8. From the following example we shall learn how he dealt with hasty and choleric dispositions. A young nobleman became enraged at some supposed offence offered him by St. Francis. After giving vent to his anger by creating a great noise and disturbance in front of the holy Prelate's house, he went at last to his room. There he reviled the saintly bishop by every disgraceful expression that rage could suggest. Looking mildly at his abuser, (who stood before him foaming with anger) St. Francis answered not a single word. The young nobleman, considering this silence as a mark of contempt, became still more enraged and gave full vent to his passion. The bishop continued calm and silent. When the bold intruder had withdrawn, a witness of the scene asked the holy man how he had been able to keep silence on such a provoking occasion. "My friend," was the answer, "my tongue and I have made an inviolable contract with each other, agreeing that whilst I am under the influence of excited feelings, it

will never utter a word. The excitement over, it is free to say what it pleases. How could I have better taught this young nobleman how to speak kindly and properly, than by being silent? And by what means could I have sooner and more easily subdued his anger than by silence? After the lapse of a few hours, he will regret his behavior and come to beg my pardon. Should he not do so, I will beg his, and this from my heart. Ought we not to be merciful to a poor fellow-creature who is such a slave to passion? If God were to strike us with death when we are in the heat of passion, what would we think of it? It is an acknowledged fact, that no one ever regretted being silent, whilst many often feel remorse for having spoken."

9. "One day," says St. Frances de Chantal, speaking of St. Francis de Sales, "I represented to him that he had spent too much time in talking with a person possessed of very little judgment or consideration. He replied: "I am the debtor of all, of the wise and of the foolish."

On another occasion she reproached him for having held a long conversation with a poor man about a trifling matter, which she termed nonsense. He answered: "What appears a piece of nonsense to you, is for these poor people of great importance."

When it was remarked to him, that it seemed like money and time lost, to bestow alms and kindness on persons who would not go to confession and amend their lives, he replied: "Human misery is so great that we should always have compassion upon it and never despair of any one's conversion."

"Men," said he, "ought to be patient with one another. Those are the most courageous, who can best

bear with the foibles of their fellow-creatures. This mutual endurance of imperfections, constitutes in a great measure perfection and is one of the best means to practise fraternal charity. It is easy to love persons of an amiable and attractive disposition; but to bestow affection upon those who are obstinate, ill-humored, and irritable, is the touchstone of charity. We ought also to be kind and gentle towards our neighbor, when he proves burdensome and disagreeable to us, for then we are sure that there is nothing in him to excite our love. Consequently, loving him only for the love of God, our charity is more sublime and meritorious, because it is pure and free from human respect."

In his writings as well as in his conférences the holy bishop insisted particularly upon certain virtues which, he said, were not well enough known and valued. These were sincerity, patience, courteousness, kindness, and forbearance with the faults of others. He considered it an error for any one to imagine that he was capable of doing great things for his neighbor when he could not patiently bear with the untimely intrusion of ill-mannered, cross-grained, rude, and especially tiresome people. Influenced by these principles, he bore with everything from all indiscriminately, never causing pain to any one; and he recommended every one to act in like manner. For this reason he would never tolerate detraction from any person whatever. When the faults of others were mentioned in his presence, he was accustomed to excuse them, saying: "Had a fault a hundred sides, we ought to look only at the least displeasing one." When he could not excuse the fault, he would exclaim: "O, how great is human misery! 'Sciant gentes, quoniam homines sunt.'

Let the nations understand, seeing they are men! How violent, too, are temptations! Through how many critical moments has not the heart of man to pass!" Again he would say: "Without the protecting grace of God, we might have done worse,—perhaps we would already be in hell! They may yet be converted and become great saints. St. Augustine and holy David are proofs, of this." Again: "It is strange that so many have the love of chastity and yet so few possess the chastity of love; that is, true, genuine, pure love, which is the queen, mother, and soul of all the other virtues."

He did not wish any one to be disturbed at improper conversations, that might arise in company without his concurrence. "In company with others be not disturbed," he says, "at what is said or done. If it is anything good, thank God for it; if it is bad, then you have an opportunity to serve God by turning your heart from it without showing either surprise or displeasure at it. You cannot remedy the evil, neither have you the authority to put a stop to it. Therefore an effort to do so might induce the offenders to say or do still worse. By acting in this manner you will remain uninjured by the hissing of the serpent." He would not even have us think those damned, who had led bad lives. "Final perseverance does not depend upon our merits. God has reserved for himself the knowledge of those on whom it is bestowed."

10. Sometimes it happened that apostates would fly to the holy bishop of Geneva for refuge, and cast themselves into his arms. He received them with open heart, as his lost children. "Come, come, my children," said he, "come to my arms! God will assist you, and I will be

his instrument. Do not yield to despair; with our Lord's help, everything will be right again." Some were scandalized at this manner of acting. They said that he thus eulogized wickedness and suffered it to go unpunished, which would be followed by bad consequences. "Ah!" was his answer, "are they not my sheep? My Saviour gave them all of his blood; how could I refuse them my tears? They whom you now look upon as wolves, will, by degrees, become lambs; nay, the day will come when they will be greater saints than any of us. Had Saul been rejected, we never would have had Paul. Have a little patience and charity. For my part, I would rather send them to purgatory than to hell. Tell me, I pray you, to whom ought we to be merciful, if not to sinners? God sends them to me so that I may heal them and draw them from the abyss of perdition. Would you have me thwart the designs of God? Ah! my heart is not hard enough to harbor so little love and pity. I will be lost with them, or try to save them. They are my dearest children. Being their bishop, I know it is my duty to admonish them somewhat severely: but I prefer to treat them with the tenderness of paternal love. He who is in favor of severity need not expect a hearing from me; I will not enlist in his party, for it is my firm resolution not to be severe."

11. One day he was asked whether it might be allowed to wish for a faultless Superior, one who would be an unspotted mirror for all. The saint gave the following clear and simple answer: Such an impossibility ought not to be desired, or else the wish should be accompanied by a prayer, that Almighty God would send down from heaven such a one. It is rank heresy

to consider a man in this world faultless ; and even supposing that God would deign to send to us from heaven such a so-called guiltless creature, voices would be raised against him, and justly could it be said with the olden sage : ‘*In hoc errat quod nunquam errat—He errs because he never errs.*’ What confidence would be placed in such a man ? Would it not be said of him, that he knows nothing of human weakness ? St. Peter committed a great fault, nevertheless he was chosen to be the head of the Church. Cast, then, your eyes rather on the virtues of Superiors than on their faults. The weaker and more miserable they are, the more meritorious will be your obedience.”

12. “My lord,” it was said to him, “you have often declared that a pastor ought to have a tender, affectionate heart ; that you consider this absolutely necessary to render him capable of directing and governing souls properly and of winning their love.” He replied : “One must have a father’s or a mother’s heart, or rather the two united, in order to understand what a tender heart is. That agonized mother, whose every feeling of love asserted its power when Solomon decided that her child should be cut in two, and divided between her and the pretended mother, could better explain this than I. It is learned, not from rule and principle, not from the golden words of eloquence, but from the exercise of sincere and heartfelt affection, which love awakens in our innermost soul. The father of the prodigal son could also tell you what it is. He received his child with open arms, with tearful eyes, and a swelling heart, which was overflowing with love and joy at the wanderer’s return.

“Therefore the tender love of a good pastor consists in this :

First, His heart ought to be so very affectionate as to be always ready to pardon and excuse the faults and imperfections of his subjects.

Secondly, This love of the heart should be manifested by kind and gentle words, which will impart such a charm to everything he says or does as to satisfy and please each and all.

Thirdly, He should never utter a harsh or imperious word. On the contrary, he ought to assume and preserve a kind and amiable countenance, beaming with mildness and love, so as to cheer and encourage his brethren. He ought, above all things, to guard against those fierce and sullen looks, which of themselves repel and refuse a petition, as in the case of those who grant a favor so unwillingly, that the recipient does not even thank them for it.

Fourthly, His manner of conversation should always be mild, calm, sincere, simple and unaffected; for, where there is constraint, there is no affection, as we learn from the teachings of the Holy Ghost and the grace of Jesus Christ."

13. Our saint possessed all this in the most perfect degree. Many flattered him, others showed him the greatest marks of respect, whilst some, on the contrary, threatened his life and heaped injuries upon him. But sincerity, love, and serenity constantly shone upon his countenance. His kind and innocent eyes, his moderation in speech, his personal consideration, in fine, his whole exterior produced so powerful an effect, that but few words were necessary to transform these wolves into lambs. "Gentlemen," he was accustomed to say to the flatterers, "I know myself better than you

know me. Francis de Sales is a miserable creature; of this God and my confessor are aware. Our Lord and his angels rejoice at the return of a sinner, and should not I be glad when a poor, unfortunate man throws himself into my arms after having caused me so great care and trouble? We might almost say that Jesus Christ showed more love to sinners than to the good, since in his mortal life he was pleased to welcome them, eat with them, and work miracles for them, so that he might have an opportunity to pardon them. Thence we must conclude that, if we desire to gain the hearts of others, we should guide and govern them mildly and affectionately."

14. "My lord," asked some one of him one day, "how are those to be governed who are constantly falling into the same faults after repeated admonitions? How must we act in such circumstances?" He replied: "We must do as Jesus Christ has taught, namely, we should forgive, not only seven times, but seventy times seven times, and in case of necessity, seven hundred thousand times, and seven million times, and even as long as eternity lasts. If God bears with them, why should not man? Will it not suffice, if they are at last converted? And, even should this not come to pass, are we excused from making use of every means in our power to lead them back to the right path? Am I not bishop rather for sinners than for saints, who do not need my assistance? Is not the shepherd placed over the fold for the sake of the wandering sheep? For whom is the physician, for the sick or for the healthy? Did Jesus Christ come for the just or for sinners? Charity is not to be extended so much to the good, who stand in no need of our help, as to the wicked. Nor is humility as

necessary in the praise and honor bestowed upon us by the good, as in the revilings of the bad. Few understand how to guide men according to the Spirit of God."

15. One day he was told that a certain Prelate never tired reading his books and speaking well of him. "Sir," was the answer, "this Prelate would please me much better, were he to read me as I am. I know Francis de Sales better than any one in the world does. My heart and my confessor are the two witnesses of my misery. It is my opinion that a good bishop or Superior ought not to pay the least attention to what is said of him. Neither should he take pleasure in the good opinion which others have of him, or in the reputation won by the little good he may have done. This dazzles him and obscures self-knowledge. The best resolution he can take is to meditate upon his faults in all sincerity of heart. A man who believes that everything he does is done well and who thinks that he commits no faults, or very slight ones, is a shepherd who feeds himself, and not his sheep, a person who gives himself much trouble and gains nothing. Consequently, since he is faithless to his trust, the blessing of God will not rest upon him and his labor. The greatest treasure of a Superior is that deeply rooted humility, which ascribes to God all the good that is done, and to itself all the faults that are committed by self or by others. Those who boast of always being in the right, are very suspicious characters. They are like those persons who look steadily at the sun in broad mid-day. They believe everything they see to be a sun; but the by-standers know that they are looking at nothing but thorns, filth, and worthless objects. So it is with the would-be impeccable. Their eyes are overflowing with light; but it is the blinding light of self-love."

16. Whilst he was in Paris, invitations to preach poured in upon him. His mornings and evenings were equally engaged. A priest remarked to him: "My lord, you are absolutely killing yourself. Excuse me for saying that you are over-burdened with sermons." Smiling, he took the hand of the kind remonstrator, and said: "Father, I assure you, it is easier for me to deliver a sermon, than to say no. Since God has made me a bishop and preacher of his Word, is it not but just that I should work at my trade? But I am really astonished at Paris making so much of me; since my tongue is so heavy, my ideas so simple, and my preaching so commonplace. You yourself are aware of this. You know that I speak the truth; and tell me, are you not yourself surprised at seeing so many of the good Parisians at my sermons?" "Do you think, my lord, that all these people can hear your beautiful discourses? It is enough for them to see you in the pulpit. Your heart speaks through your countenance and eyes, and were you to say only four words, they would be satisfied with the sight of a man like you. Your seemingly heavy tongue makes so much the deeper impression; your simple, home-spun expressions burning with the fire of love, penetrate into the heart and soften it; and there is an extraordinary something in your words, which cannot be defined. Each one of them has its own weight; each forces its way into the soul; each one makes a strong impression. You say nothing, and yet everything is said. Another might talk four times as much as you, and yet produce no effect. It would be useless, because no one would attend to it. You are master of a certain Savoyard or heavenly rhetoric, which brings forth the most wonderful fruit."

Here, St. Francis de Sales embraced the good priest, Father Binet, S. J., and smilingly enforced silence upon him in this point. When he could not help refusing, the manner in which the refusal was given, made it doubtful whether the petitioner had met with a disappointment or received a favor.

17. One of his maxims deserves to be held as an oracle from heaven. "As sugar seldom spoils anything," said he, "so it is with meekness; and even should a fault happen to be committed in the exercise of this virtue, it will be free of blame in the eyes of God, or it will lead to such good, that what the Church sings of the sin of Adam, may be applied to it. "O happy fault, which brought down from heaven the Redeemer of the world, and with him a superabundance of happiness!" On the contrary, a harsh and repulsive manner produces little good and much evil. It closes the heart, excites hatred, spoils and even destroys the good that is already done; it makes a man so disagreeable, that no one thanks him for a favor, or even feels an obligation of acknowledging a service." He tells us the surprising fact, that for three whole years he studied the virtues of the Heart of Jesus,—humility and meekness, and yet, at the end of that time, was not satisfied with the practical knowledge which he had acquired. If he who was amiability and kindness itself, spent entire years in such an exercise and yet believed that he made so little progress in the practice of these virtues, what will they do, whose hearts are full of thorns, whose actions are rude and repulsive, who have none but bitter words in their mouths, whose countenance inspires fear, and whose whole demeanor is arrogant and magisterial? How can such persons im-

agine themselves to be capable of governing others, when they cannot even master a miserable little passion? This holy bishop will judge many a pastor and Superior and servant of God.

He was accustomed to receive everybody with unparalleled kindness, even priests of bad reputation. Many blamed him for this and took scandal at it. Our saint only smiled and said: "Is it not better to lead them gently to the purgatory of a good penance than roughly to cast them into the hell of black despair and final impenitence? Think you that severity would lead those to purgatory, who would scarcely be willing to purchase heaven by submission to such rough dealing, which must indeed be quite intolerable to a heart already tortured by a thousand fears? I find no better remedy against the impatient swellings of the heart, which pass under the name of zeal, than a gentle, unrepachable silence. For, however little we may say, there is in it too great a mixture of self-love, and so many thoughtless words escape us that, for twenty-four hours afterwards, the heart is embittered by them. If we say nothing, but let the evil wind blow over, then be assured, anger and impudence will stand amazed, and the heart will ere long overflow with joy.

"Another thing which must naturally be unpleasant and burdensome to pastors is when a thousand persons and things appear together, or come in quick succession one after the other, each demanding a prompt hearing and settlement, without leaving one time to breathe. But I have made a covenant with my heart and tongue, and I do as Job did, when one servant after another came to him, bringing bad news. He spoke to each of them ;

and when two talked together, he answered both at once. This trial is presented to us by our Lord, in order to see whether we are prepared to meet any attack. There are some children who are always running after their mother. A hen is never angry when its young ones run altogether under its wings. On the contrary, she spreads them out as wide as she can and covers the little chickens as far as she is able. It seems to me that my heart enlarges in proportion as these good people increase, and I have so accustomed myself to look upon them all as my children, that one is as dear to me as another."

18. The bishop of Belley having one day remarked to St. Francis de Sales, that too great familiarity with such people ought to be avoided, since, according to the old proverb, familiarity breeds contempt, the holy man answered: "It is true, that gross familiarity is to be blamed, but not that which is polite, kind, chaste, and virtuous; for, since it proceeds from charity, it produces true love, which is never devoid of esteem, and consequently, never wanting in reverence. There is no one for whom we feel greater reverence, or whom we would more fear to displease than a person whom we love with our whole heart. We ought always to be mindful that our servants are our brethren and our poor fellow-creatures. Charity obliges us to love them as ourselves. Let us then love these dear brethren who are so closely connected with us, dwelling under the same roof, and let us treat them as we would wish to be treated, if we were in their place."

He was accessible to all, we are told by his biographers, to the bold and importunate as well as to his best friends. He received the crowds who visited him, with a holy joy

and admirable cheerfulness. Never did he suffer the clouds of lassitude or aversion to darken his countenance. If unimportant matters were spoken of, he listened with as much earnestness as if he were incapable of discussing weightier subjects. If important things were the subject of conversation, he gave that attention to them that seemed to deny the fact of his ever having taken part in the discussion of trifles. He listened with pleasure, and preferred every one to himself. He gave full scope to the talents of others without ever attempting to bring his own superior endowments to light.

19. Whoever wishes to see the spirit of this great saint, as it were, in a mirror, need only read the rules he wrote for the Order of the Visitation. In them there is nothing but sincere affection, childlike simplicity, maternal love, incredible forbearance and condescension, the most extreme meekness and charity, compassionate indulgence for the weakness of others; in a word, they breathe the fervor of divine love and invincible patience. It is easily seen that in the same ecstasy in which he was told that he was to be the founder of a religious Order, he was inspired with this divine manner of making the direction of souls a less burdensome charge than it had hitherto been. His tears were his weapons. His commands assumed the form of gentle and amiable petitions, so that no heart could withstand him. His great principal was to ask for nothing and to refuse nothing. But this maxim may truthfully be divided into two parts. We may say that he, indeed, never asked for anything, but that, at the same time, nothing was ever refused to him, when it was known that he liked it. His servants loved him as their father. He never spoke

harshly to them, and they, in their turn, strove day and night to serve him with filial love. He was also wont to say, that pure and genuine charity is more readily recognized in services done to the imperfect than to others, that it is better to exceed in kindness and charity than in that false and perverse zeal, which is often nothing but impatience.

20. One who has not a generous heart, will never make a good pastor or Superior. Narrow hearts are drowned in a glass of water ; whereas generous ones sport in the deepest oceans. As soon as an inferior has committed a blame-worthy fault, a narrow-minded Superior tries to get rid of him. He finds a thousand reasons to send him elsewhere. Now, this is sheer weakness and betrays a cowardly heart and little virtue. A generous-hearted Superior is surprised at nothing. He never wishes to get rid of any one. His heart is large enough to receive all. He believes that, since God has given these imperfect subjects to him, it is precisely in this point he ought to prove his fidelity to his charge. Would it not be strange to see a physician run off at the sight of a sick man, or a shepherd take to flight on the approach of a wolf? Some may say that they are willing to direct those who perform their duty, but that they cannot burden themselves with the care of the troublesome. Such persons will never make good Superiors ; for he who cannot steer a ship in stormy, as well as in calm weather, is not a good pilot.

O how many there are, who, under the pretence of humility and amiability, prove faithless to God and rob themselves of merit in his eyes !

21. St. Francis, however, did not wish that under the

pretext of kindness and mildness, faults should be allowed to slip into religious communities or suffered to go unpunished without any effort to restrain the boldness of the prevaricator. He desired meekness and severity to be prudently blended, according to necessity. He says : "Towards effeminate and selfish souls we ought to act with determination, always opposing such false delicacy of feeling wherever it may appear and ever guarding against its appearance. However, this is not to be confounded with corporal infirmity. Where it is evident that the weakness is natural, the greatest compassion should be felt, especially for such as commit faults through surprise or mere human frailty without malice. Too great tenderness towards self, either with regard to soul or body, is a fault which is quite as detrimental to steadfast piety as precipitation. Both are marks of great self-love; consequently, we ought ever to be on our guard against them." St. Gregory says : "Be affectionate, but not weak; strict, but not repulsive; compassionate, but not to such a degree as to lose your authority."

Whilst St. Francis de Sales was one day delivering a sermon, he noticed in the church a young man, who was behaving very badly, and, among other acts of boldness, constantly peering into the face of a young woman. Such demeanor was so painful to the holy preacher, that giving free vent to his zeal, he cried out : "What! would you make of the house of God a robber's den? If you do not cease your improper conduct, I will point to you with my finger, and thus draw the attention of all present upon you. Were I alone concerned, you might pass unnoticed; but there is question of the honor of God, a thing too dear to my heart to suffer me to leave

anything undone, to keep every one within the limits of duty." According to necessity, he could be as zealous as Elias, and as courageous as a lion. In his communications with the Pope, the king of France, or the Duke of Savoy, he spoke freely and uninfluenced by human respect. He would have God honored as God, and he was ever ready to give up life, honor and property for his service. This made him so great a mirror and model for bishops and Superiors.

22. Having one day taken for his text the following words : " But if any man strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also ;" (Matt. v, 39) on leaving the church, he was publicly accosted by a Calvinist in a very rude manner. " Since you tell us that when one cheek is struck, the other should be presented, that is doubtless the cause of both of yours being red. But, tell me, if I were now to give you a box, would you really practise what you have just been teaching ? It is more probable that you are of the number of those whosay and do not." (Matt. xxiii, 3.) " My friend," answered Francis, " I know very well what I ought to do, but I do not know what I might do, for I am a miserable creature. I put my trust in the grace of God, who can turn a frail reed into a firm pillar. But if proving unfaithful to grace, I should not happen to bear the insult in a Christian manner, the Gospel teaches in the very place just quoted by you, where it blames the preacher for not practising what he preaches, that my words and not my works are to be followed." " But," objected the Calvinist, " our Saviour did not offer his other cheek to the servant of the high-priest when he was struck by him." " Would you, then, reckon our Saviour among those

who do not observe what they teach?" asked Francis. "God preserve us from thinking thus of Him who is the model of all perfection! All his works are perfect, and we have no right to blame any of them or demand an account of them. Nevertheless, it is easy to imagine the reason why our Lord did not offer his other cheek. Burning with zeal for the salvation of that impious man, he wished to move him to repentance by drawing his attention to his fault. Later in his Passion, he practised most perfectly the counsel which he had given; for he presented not only his cheek, but his whole face to the blows and spittle of the rabble, and his entire body to the scourgers." The Calvinist was satisfied with this answer, but the Catholics present were not so, by any means. They would have rather heard the holy Apostle sharply rebuke this bold young man for his insolence; but the saint was far from being of their opinion. The words of the Calvinist would have been still bolder, had Francis de Sales been less mild in his answers. He avoided everything that could, in the least, wound heretics, never making use of an injurious or degrading word to them. Never, in the pulpit or elsewhere, did he speak of them in an angry or contemptuous manner. Instead of alienating their hearts by throwing ridicule on them in the refutation of their errors, he tried rather to win them by laying before them, first, the truth, and then the beauty of Catholicity; and this he did so mildly and politely, that they could not help seeing how much he loved them.

23. In vain did heretics attack him with embittered hearts, in vain did they treat him disrespectfully and insolently. He always answered them calmly and mildly,

without the least appearance of contention, in accordance with the doctrine of the Apostle : “ But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor hath the Church of God.” (I. Cor. ii, 16.) He called every one “ brother,” according to the custom of the early Fathers of the Church, who gave this name to the heretics of their time. He gave the following reason for this : “ Protestants are our brethren, as Christians and as men, because by baptism we are all children of the same God, and by birth we descend from the same father, Adam. Moreover, those to whom I speak, are my country-men and fellow-citizens ; consequently, there exists between them and me a kind of fraternity.”

This manner of acting was not pleasing to some of his fellow-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. It was their opinion that heretics ought to be treated as men of uncircumcised hearts, as rebels against God, as stiff-necked and obdurate creatures, as a brood of vipers, in fine, as the children of Satan. They thought themselves justified by the Holy Scriptures, in using such language. The saint tried to undeceive them by representing that mildness had more influence over men than severity, just as with a spoonful of honey more flies are caught than with a barrel of vinegar ; that pride which is so natural to the human race, and especially to religious sectarians, should be treated with indulgence and forbearance. Having no infallible authority for their doctrine, the spirit of pride becomes characteristic of them. Consequently, every severe and harsh word embitters and excites instead of instructing them. He gave his own experience in proof of this. “ Every time I have made use of cutting language, of reproachful or fault-

finding words, I have had cause to regret it. If it has been my good fortune to win over some heretics, it must be ascribed to the power of gentleness. Charity and sincere affection have more influence over the heart, I will not say, than severity, but even more than the force and solidity of argument." In further support of this principle, he pointed to the example of Jesus Christ, who, although he might most justly have thought severity necessary towards the stiff-necked Jews, nevertheless taught his divine doctrine with unparalleled amiability and affection.

24. He thought that those who allow their zeal to get the better of their temper when conversing with heretics, make their cause suspicious; that the light of truth, even when presented by a cautious hand, often injures the weak eyes of dissenters, but when it is rashly, regardlessly of feelings or dispositions, thrust full into the face, it entirely blinds them. "Never," said he, "will truth make its way forward without charity. It is quite different with regard to impiety; for, if we abstract from the works of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Beza, all the calumnies, abusive language, invectives, and mockery against the Pope and Catholics, there will be little left to engage the attention."

25. When he was in conversation with persons of distinction, he showed them the greatest honor, addressing them by that title which he thought the most pleasing to them; "for," said he, "as there is no one who cares less about receiving honor than I do, there is no one more willing to show honor to others." On an occasion in which he had treated a nobleman's servant with great distinction, a remark was made to him about it. He answered: "I scarcely know how to discriminate be-

tween persons ; one thing alone is ever before my eyes,— which is, that they are all Christians.”

In his conversations he contradicted no one as long as conscience allowed him to be silent. Was he obliged to meet falsehood with truth, he did it mildly and modestly, without the appearance of contesting with his opponent ; “for,” said he, “nothing is gained in a cause which is conducted with bitterness.”

26. Such reasoning was of no avail with his fellow-laborers. They held to their own opinion in the matter. They went farther. Thinking that Francis de Sales was wrong, they held a meeting, in which it was determined to rebuke the saint in so earnest a manner that his eyes would be opened to his fault. They did so. They represented to him that, thinking to do good, he was ruining everything ; that his mildness would lead the heretics to imagine the Catholics were afraid of them, and would have no other effect than to strengthen their pride ; that it is the duty of a preacher of the Gospel to admonish his hearers and not to flatter them ; that heretics are sooner converted when boldly dealt with in the beginning, than when treated with too much indulgence. The holy Apostle received these admonitions most respectfully, kindly and gratefully. He said not a word to justify himself. He knew that any effort to undeceive them would be vain, because, as he said later, they were like persons looking through colored glass. Everything around seemed to be of the same color as the glass. His conscience, however, did not allow him to embrace their opinion, and he continued in his usual mild style of preaching. Observing no improvement in him, his zealous co-laborers resolved to lodge their complaints

against him with the bishop of Geneva. They begged his lordship to recall Francis to Annecy. They asserted that he undid in one day a month's labor of theirs. They said he preached more like a Protestant minister than a Catholic priest, even forgetting himself so far as to call heretics his brethren, a scandal which rejoiced the Protestants; for they promised themselves an easy victory over him, hoping to draw him by degrees over to their party. Consequently, they ran in crowds to listen to his musical and flattering words, they lent a willing ear to his fraternal language, as if there could be anything in common between light and darkness, the children of Jesus Christ and those of Belial. The bishop of Geneva knew the holy Apostle too well to pay any attention to such complaints and petitions. He limited himself to giving them a kind answer, and recommending to them—for he knew their intentions were good—charity, union, and mutual support. On his part, Francis de Sales continued to treat them with his usual affability, applauding the success of their labors, praising them on every occasion and ascribing to them the fruits of the mission.

27. "My lord," said a convert to Francis de Sales, "I was born a Calvinist and I have only lately joined the Catholic Church. The objections which I have just laid before you, were still troubling me, and had you not so clearly and mildly removed them, to-morrow would have seen me again a Calvinist."

28. On an occasion, in which St. Francis de Sales had borne with a gross insult without uttering a word in self-defence, his brother asked him whether he had felt no movement of anger. "Certainly I did," answered

the saint; "the blood was boiling in my veins, like water in a vessel on the fire, but by dint of careful examination of conscience, which I have constantly practised for twenty-two years, and with the help of unwearying watchfulness, constant struggles, and repeated victories gained over myself, I have, if I may be allowed the expression, so collared my anger, that it is entirely in my power."

29. The following directions were given by St. Francis de Sales to all Superiors of the Visitation Order.

He laid down as a primary principle that the Superiors should distinguish themselves by their meekness and humility, because these were the virtues which our Lord required in the Apostles, whom he had destined to be the spiritual rulers of the whole world. "Dive deep into the abyss of your own nothingness, seeing that God has vouchsafed to make use of so insignificant a person for the important task of guiding the souls of others. In order to perform this duty well, be neither haughty nor obsequious, but gentle, amiable and kind. Love all with a sincerely maternal, a protecting love. Be everything to each one, a mother to each, a help to each and a joy to all. If you act in this manner, everything will go on well; if you proceed in a contrary way, nothing will succeed."

His second principle was that a Superior should put her trust in God, which is much more efficacious than self-distrust. The consciousness of his assistance should fill her with humble energy and strength; with the strength of him who manifested his omnipotence in the humility of the cross.

"Since your divine Master has imposed this duty upon

you," said he, "he is obliged to lend you his helping hand. Do you believe that so kind a Father would appoint you to be the nurse of his children without supplying you with an abundant store of milk, butter and honey? God has laid these souls on your bosom, so that you may make them worthy of him. Be assured, then, that he will stretch forth his almighty arm in proportion to the work imposed upon you."

After the saint had given the above-mentioned principles as a guide for the Superiors of his Order, he spoke of the duties of their office in the following manner: "Strive most carefully to acquire a holy equanimity. Never appear sad or sullen, whatever may have happened. Let there be no trace of frivolity in your countenance or demeanor, which should always be serious, but, at the same time, mild and humble. Let your laugh be moderate and your eyes generally downcast. Be courteous and kind, but not to such a degree as to weaken the reverence and respect due to you. Follow the community simply in everything, without doing more or less than the other sisters. Each one looks up to you for good example; and all expect this example to be accompanied by great affability. As the lamp is fed by oil, so does the effect of good example depend upon this virtue. Nothing is so edifying as that meekness of heart, which remains undisturbed by time or circumstances."

With respect to direction, he did not wish that Superiors should be too strict with the sisters, nor yet to allow them too great freedom. He cautioned them against showing any mistrust of their inferiors. Whilst he wished them to yield nothing of their authority as Superiors, he taught them to bear with the sisters, meekly and with kind service

to treat all alike, avoiding the least indication of partiality or aversion for any individual. He bade them remember that the Superior was not so much for the strong as for the weak, although it was her duty to take care of all, so that the more advanced might not fall back, and the most imperfect might find that support in her tender affection which would lead to amendment. He warned them not to show displeasure at whatever might be communicated to them, encouraging them to resolve firmly to do all for God. Acting thus, he said, they would not feel hurt at being blamed for their manner of governing; they would listen calmly to everything; lay all before God, and, after having conferred with their counsellors, would do what was considered best, with the pious confidence that Divine Providence would turn everything to their honor and advantage. All this they should do with so great peace and meekness, that their subjects would have no pretext to show less respect and reverence, nor would the counsellors have any reason to imagine that the Superior stood in need of their assistance in the direction of the community. "Be firm in the strict observance of the rule," said he. "Be discreet in your own deportment and try to preserve your house in good repute. Teach your sisters to love, praise and serve God with one heart. Tell them that he has brought them together so that they may assist one another to serve him in an excellent, generous, heroical and steadfast manner. Encourage them to strive after the great and perfect virtues of firm, unvarying and noble-hearted piety, self-denial, love of abjection and contempt, mortification of the senses and sincere charity. Instruct them to do whatever is prescribed by the Superior, neither more nor less, and without

any other intention than to please the Divine Majesty." "It is hard," he added, "to deny, and, as it were, to annihilate one's self at every moment; but the skill of the gentle and affectionate Mother knows how to lessen the bitterness of these disagreeable potions by mixing them with the milk of holy friendship, being always ready to receive her children cheerfully and kindly, so that they will run to her with joy and allow themselves to be moulded, like sealing-wax, in the fire of her burning love."

30. At the close of a mission, during which he had been day and night hearing confessions, he wrote to St. Jane Frances de Chantal as follows: "These have been golden days for me. Oh! what joy I feel at the conversion of so many souls! I have been reaping in smiles and in tears of love, amongst my dear penitents! O, Saviour of my soul, what joy was mine to see, among others, a young man of twenty, brave and stout as a giant, return to the Catholic faith, and confess his sins in so holy a manner that it was easy to recognize the wonderful workings of divine grace leading him back to the way of salvation! I was quite beside myself with joy, and gave him many a kiss of peace."

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART IV.

The Mixed Life of the Priest.

CHAPTER I.

THE MIXED LIFE—WHAT IS MEANT BY IT.

By *mixed* life is understood that kind of life which unites contemplation to action, that is, prayer to such works as tend to the love of God and our neighbor. This kind of life is considered to be the most perfect. St. Thomas says that, though the contemplative life in itself is more perfect than the active, yet the mixed life is the most perfect of all, because it was the life of Jesus Christ himself. "As it is something greater to enlighten than to shine," he says, "so, in like manner, it is something greater to communicate to others the fruits of contemplation (of prayer and meditation) than merely to contemplate." When Elias retired into the desert, the Lord made him the following reproach: "What are you doing?" Just as if the Lord had said to him: There is no time now to give yourself up to a life of quiet contemplation. Our Lord, too, deferred his Ascension into heaven for forty days in order to instruct his disciples. St. Francis of

Assisi believed that he would please God better if, from time to time, he would leave contemplation alone and go out to preach to the people.

The life of every good priest must be like that of our Lord. He must understand how to unite a life of prayer to a life of action.

There are priests who are zealous for their own salvation and zealous for the salvation of the people: these are really good priests; these are saints and apostles. Saints, because they strive by every means in their power to attain to priestly perfection; apostles, because they spare no pains in leading to heaven the flocks entrusted to their care. Happy are such pastors! Happy are their flocks!

There are priests who are zealous for their own salvation, and unconcerned about the salvation of the people; these are good Christians, but not good priests; they would be saints, if they were not priests; but, being what they are, we see in each of them merely half a priest.

There are priests zealous for the salvation of the people and unconcerned about their own salvation. These are honest workmen in the service of the Church, dealers in sacraments, serving out matter and form without any double dealing, preaching sermons accurately orthodox, and not "keeping the truth captive." Such priests are not traitors to their people, but they are the greatest traitors to themselves; they would be apostles if they could be such without being saints.

Finally, there are priests who are unconcerned about their own salvation, and equally unconcerned about the salvation of the people. These are neither saints nor

apostles ; they are not even conscientious Christians ; they are simply priests faithless to their vocation, not caring to open heaven to others, not caring to open heaven to themselves.

A bishop, preaching a Retreat to the Clergy, addressed these words in accents of grief to his audience : “ The light of faith, you say, is growing dimmer day by day ; and yet, *you are the light of the world*. Corruption again, you say, is spreading amongst all—of every age, and of every condition—and yet, *you are the salt of the earth*. Has the light then been put out ? Has the salt lost its savor and its power ? Is not the Word of God still upon your lips ! Is not the Blood of Jesus Christ still in your hands ? Forty thousand priests in France, and Christianity languishing in France ! Truly and in very deed this is a mystery ! ! ! ”

But this mystery can be easily explained. To be and to remain worthy priests and apostles, we must not care more for our neighbor’s salvation and sanctification than for our own. The Holy Ghost says :

“ Recover thy neighbor according to thy power ; and take heed to thyself, that thou fall not. ” (Eccle. xxix, 26.)

It is our Lord Jesus Christ himself who has cautioned us against over-great zeal. “ What does it profit a man, ” says he, “ to gain the world, if he loseth his own soul ? And what can a man give in exchange of his own soul ? ” (Matt. xvi, 26.) Nothing can compensate for this loss. Common sense and well ordered charity require, that we should not neglect our own salvation for anything whatsoever in this world, and that we should never relent in the least in the care of our own spiritual advancement.

The Psalmist understood this truth very well; for he prayed: "*Bonitatem et disciplinam et scientiam doce me.*" Teach me goodness, discipline, and knowledge." (Ps. cxviii, 66.) He puts goodness in the first place, because it was more necessary for him than discipline and knowledge. We must not neglect our own salvation under the pretext of laboring for the salvation of our neighbor. This would be a great mistake. Those who take more care of the amendment of others than of their own, are like wells which give clear water to others, whilst they retain the mud to themselves; or like torches which give light to others, whilst at the same time they consume themselves. We read in the life and revelations of St. Gertude, that the Lord one day sent tribulations upon a certain religious for having preferred, from human motives, a temporal good to her spiritual progress. "I have declared in the Gospel," said our Lord to her, "that you should *seek* first the kingdom of God, and its justice, and then, not that you should *seek* temporal goods, but that they would be *added* unto you." Hence St. Bernard, when explaining the words of the Canticles, "Thy name is like oil spread abroad," (Cant. i, 2) says, that the Holy Ghost works two things in us, the one, by which he first establishes us in virtue for our own advancement, and this he calls "*infusion*;" the other by which he communicates to us his gifts and graces, for the profit and advancement of our neighbor, and this he calls "*effusion*," or pouring forth; because it is a grace that is given us to bestow it upon others. Now the *infusion*, says he, ought to precede the *effusion*; we must first be filled with virtue ourselves before we can fill others with it. Be then like a reservoir and not like a channel; a channel retains no water, whilst a reservoir

remains filled with it and lets only run off what is superfluous. And in order that you may not despise this counsel as coming from me, says the saint, know that it is not I, but the Holy Ghost himself that gives it : “ A fool uttereth all his mind ; a wise man deferreth and keeps it till afterwards.” (Prov. xxix, 11.) The one like a channel retains nothing ; the other, on the contrary, like a reservoir lets nothing run over until it is filled. “ But, alas !” says this saint, “ the misery is, that we have nowadays a great many channels in the Church, but very few reservoirs ”—(serm. 18 in Canti.) There are many ministers of the altar who are like channels out of which the water of the divine word passes to water the hearts of the faithful and to cause them to bring forth the fruits of grace and benediction, but they remain dry themselves. They seem to have so much charity, says the saint, that they wish to give away, before they have gathered enough for themselves. They wish to guide, and help others, and know not how to take care of themselves. There is a great deal of folly, and no charity, in this, because there is no degree of charity above that which the Wise Man advises us to have for ourselves, when he says : “ Take pity on your own soul, by rendering it pleasing to God.” (Eccl. xxx, 24.) Behold here the first thing we have to do ; behold what we ought to begin with ; only after this first thing, the advancement of our neighbor must follow. For if I have but a little oil left for my own use, as the widow of Sarepta, do you think I will deprive myself of it for you ? I will keep it, and I will not give it away, except at the prophet’s command. I will say with the virgins : “ Lest there should not be enough for me and for thee ; go rather to those that sell

it and buy some for thyself" (Matt. xxv, 29); "for it is not just," says the Apostle, "that others should be eased, and you burdened; but by an equality;" (1 Cor. viii, 13.) This is all that true charity requires of you, which commands you to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. xxii, 39); behold here the equality of which St. Paul speaks. But he does not require of you that you should love your neighbor better than yourself; that you should prefer him to yourself; and that you should neglect the care of your own spiritual advancement, in order to labor for that of others. "Let my soul," says the prophet, "be filled with marrow and fatness (exquisite and delicious food :) and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips (shall sing hymns of joy and thanksgiving). (Ps. lxii, 6.) Our heart, therefore, should first be filled in order that it may be from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks; and it is for this reason that the Apostle says, "that we ought very carefully to preserve the things which we have heard, lest we should let them slip." (Heb. ii, 1.) We ought carefully to preserve in us what the grace of God has poured into us; we ought to let flow from us as from a vessel that is full, and not let it leak, as out of a cracked vessel that can retain nothing.

The care for our neighbor's salvation, instead of rendering us negligent in our own, should rather make us apply to it more seriously. For a great fund of humility, mortification, and all other virtues are required to be in the world, and not to partake of the spirit of the world, and to prevent the world from making us perhaps conform ourselves unto its spirit, instead of conforming itself to our spirit. "He that handles pitch," says the Scripture, "will have his hands defiled therewith." (Eccl. xiii, 1.)

They ought to be well rubbed over with oil first, if he wishes the pitch not to stick to them. It is the same with us in regard to the people in the world. We ought to be well filled and penetrated with the unction of grace and prayer, in order that worldly conversation may not stick to us and defile us. But if we do not take this precaution, we shall have reason to fear that it may communicate its vices and maxims to us, and that these may draw us along with them, into its regularities and disorders, to verify the saying of Osee : " such as the people are, such is the priest." (Chap. iv, 9.)

One of the chief instructions that St. Ignatius gave to those whom charity engaged to converse with their neighbor, was to persuade them that those whom they had to converse with, were not perfect ; and that they went, as St. Paul says, " into the midst of a perverse generation." (Philip ii, 15.) And this warning teaches us to be extremely on our guard, lest the scandals and disorders we see amongst them, should corrupt our minds and hearts. The physicians and such as assist the sick, are accustomed, when the diseases are very contagious, to take preventives ; and to carry perfumes about them to prevent the effects of the contagion, and of the bad air of the sick people's room. Now the sick we deal and converse with in the world, are attacked with contagious diseases, which are easily caught, if we do not carry along with us the preservatives of watchfulness over ourselves, of prayer, mortification, and other virtues. Assuredly, a confessor, who is continually obliged to apply his hands to wounds full of filth and rottenness, must have a good stomach, to prevent the bad odor of the many sins he has to listen to from turning his stomach, and

exciting bad thoughts and motions that may corrupt his purity. Some say very justly, that we ought to be like certain rivers which enter into the sea without losing any of the sweetness of their water, and without mixing with that of the sea. In order to show us what priests ought to be, whose zeal and charity for souls oblige them to converse with all sorts of people, St. John Chrysostom says, that they should be in the midst of the world, as the three children were in the midst of the fiery furnace of Babylon. In truth, we are in the world in the midst of flames, and these flames are far more ardent than those of that furnace were. The flames of ambition, of impurity, of envy, of detraction, raise themselves furiously around about us, and encompass us on all sides; and because the fire penetrates wherever it finds an entrance, and spoils and blackens all it meets with, the priest of God, adds the father, ought to take care, lest this smoke approach so far as to touch him. Now to prevent the flames not only from burning us, but even to prevent the smoke of them from blackening us, what precautions ought not we to take, and with what circumspection ought not we to walk?

St. Augustine, explaining our Lord's words in the Gospel: "You are the light of the world" (Matt. v, 14), says, "that light contracts no uncleanness in passing through foul places," (Tract. iv, sup. Joan), but on the contrary, that it purifies them, and chases away their bad atmosphere without admitting any of it into itself. It is in this manner that our light ought to make manifest the sins of the world, and penetrate their filth, without contracting any corruption from them. It is thus that it ought to purify the hearts of sinners, and drive away the bad exhalations of vice.

In order to confirm ourselves more deeply in these sentiments, let us also remember, that the more we promote our own sanctification, the more we shall contribute towards that of our neighbor. For, unless we lead a holy and edifying life, all our labors for our neighbor's advancement will be but of little profit. What our neighbor must be most benefited by, is our good example. The way of example is a shorter way to virtue than that of precept, because men more readily believe what they see than what they hear. For this reason, our Saviour taught us the way to heaven by his example before he taught it by his words. "*Cœpit facere et docere*," he began to do and to teach, (Act. 1.) He practised for thirty years what he was to teach in three.

"Example," says St. Bernard, "shows us that what it teaches, is practicable, and this makes a deeper impression on us than anything else." "Man's weakness is so great," says St. Augustine, that it is with great difficulty to induce any one to do what is good, unless he sees others do it. Hence it is of the greatest importance for apostolic laborers to lead a holy and irreproachable life, and to be themselves such as they wish their fellow-men to be, in order that they may be able to say with Jesus Christ: "I have given you the example, that as I have done to you, so you do also," (John xiii, 15) or, with St. Paul: "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Jesus Christ." (I Cor. iv, 16.) St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom, speaking of those who preach only by their words, say, that they are not true preachers, but only comedians who act their part upon the stage and who are nothing of that which they represent. I may describe humility very well exteriorly, I may explain very

well the vanity of the world, and the contempt we should have for it, but if I am not really humble myself, if I do not truly despise whatever may separate me from God, then I am far from being a true preacher of the Gospel; I am only a comedian who acts only his part. I am like a painter who, though he be ugly himself, yet fails not to make and paint beautiful pictures; so, in like manner, I may paint humility in its true colors, and yet I myself may be filled with vanity and pride. I make beautiful pictures of patience, but impatience and anger disfigure me every moment. I make beautiful pictures of modesty, recollection and silence, but I am continually dissipated and distracted by a thousand frivolous objects; I am like the Scribes and Pharisees, who showed the three wise men the road to Bethlehem, but they themselves did not go along with them. To preach by my words, without preaching at the same time by my actions, is to pull down with one hand what the other has built up; it is to draw souls to God with one hand, and drive them away with the other. Woe to those who practise not themselves what they teach others; they do not touch the heart, they produce no fruit at all by their discourses. "But he who does and teaches," says our Saviour, "he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v, 19.) Those only are apostolic men who practise what they preach; they touch the heart and produce great fruit in souls. The sanctity of their lives attracts to them the veneration of all men, who look upon them as angels rather than men; whatever they say is received as coming from heaven, and leaves a lasting impression upon the heart. Thus the Apostle St. Paul orders the laborers in our Lord's vineyard to

lead an irreproachable life; to be blameless in their words and actions, and to be an example of all sorts of virtues to the whole world, in order that by this means their doctrine may more deeply penetrate the hearts of men, and destroy there whatsoever it finds contrary to Jesus Christ.

God is accustomed to bless the laborers in his vineyard in proportion to their internal merit and sanctity. If it be great, great also will be the harvest of their labors. Hence whilst laboring for others, we must not forget our own perfection. The larger a tree grows, the more fruit it will bring forth; so, the more we grow in virtue, the more profitable shall we become to our neighbor.

Here I must meet an objection, which one might make, namely; If laboring for our neighbor and dealing with him, is filled with so many dangers, I will not expose myself to it, but live in retirement as much as possible, to think only of my own salvation; for I am more strictly bound to take care of myself than of others, and it is not just to expose my own soul, to save the souls of others.

This is another extreme which must be avoided. As our Lord has warned us against the first, so he has also warned us against this in the parable of the talents. Not to use and to profit by the talents which our Lord has given us for the salvation of our neighbor, is to be like that unprofitable servant, who hid the talent of his master in the ground, and to deserve as such to be rejected by our heavenly Master. If our Lord will keep us accountable for every useless word, he will also keep us accountable for our unprofitable silence. He will not content himself with requiring an account of our own advancement, but also of what we were obliged to do for that of

our neighbor, and if he finds that we have buried the talent, he will take it from us and punish us as unprofitable servants.

We have, therefore, two things to propose to ourselves at the same time : our own perfection, and that of our neighbor, and we are obliged to labor for both, so that the care of one ought not to prevent us from taking care of the other. The more we use a knife, the brighter it becomes ; but if not used at all, it will become rusty. By teaching others, we teach ourselves. That which I say to others, often regards myself ; and perhaps I have as much need of it as they have, and if I do not practise what I teach them, I presently feel my conscience reproach me and cry out : unhappy they who practise not what they teach. The sins I hear in confession, are an admonitor for me to be on my guard, and a subject to give thanks to God for having preserved me from them, and to beseech him always to keep me from falling. By assisting others in the hour of death, we learn to have death always before our eyes, and to be always prepared for it. The many miseries and disorders we meet in the world must make us conceive a high esteem for our vocation. In a word, the duties of charity, far from being for us a cause of growing remiss in the practice of virtue, should rather be for us one of the most powerful incentives to virtue and perfection.

Experience, however, teaches, that the occupations of the holy ministry, are a means of advancing in virtue for those only who, whilst engaged in the service of their neighbor, do not neglect at the same time their spiritual exercises, that is, spiritual reading, penance, mortification, examinations of conscience, and, above all, prayer and medita-

tion. The devil seeing that he cannot prevent us from exercising our ministry, tries to tempt us to apply ourselves to it in an immoderate manner, so as to neglect our own perfection ; that is, the means to advance in it, and for this purpose he suggests different pretexts. But we cannot too much mistrust these pretexts and excuses ; nor fear too much their consequences. There is a priest ; he says : “As pastor I am over-burdened with indispensable occupations, with studies, visits of charity, works of zeal. How can I do all this ?” And in that impossibility of doing all, he sacrifices what is more important, to what is less so. What wisdom is there in this ? What can be more important for me than to save my soul ? What can be more important for my neighbor than to fit myself to procure his salvation ? I can do both only by fidelity to my religious exercises. Can I form myself to a spiritual life by neglecting the exercises thereof ? Are light and grace less necessary for me than prayer and meditation for the laity ? Must I expect an infused science of heavenly truths, and of the mysteries of the interior life, or seek that science in pious reading and wise reflections ? Can I conceive a sorrow for my faults, which would obtain pardon, without knowing them, and without exciting regret for having committed them ?

To speak of the necessity of study which is very great for a priest of the present day. But if learning is necessary for an apostolic man, holiness is much more so. “Amate scientiam,” says St. Augustine, “sed anteponite charitatem.” We wish to do good. The Apostles also wished it. But did they abridge the holy exercise of prayer, in order to gain more time for the functions of an immense ministry, visibly blest by heaven ? No : on the

contrary, they released themselves from the care of the poor, though always so dear to the Church, in order to apply themselves exclusively to two things, which absorbed all their time—*prayer* and *preaching*. “*Nos vero,*” this is the duty of the priest, “*orationi et ministerio verbi instantes erimus ;*” and remark also, that the Apostle does not say : *prædicationi verbi Dei et orationi* ; he believes prayer to be more necessary than preaching. To prayer he attributes the success of their preaching.

“*Nisi intus sit qui doceat, lingua doctoris exterius in vacuum laborat.*” (S. Greg.) “O priests, you are the ministers of the God of armies ; you must continually ascend and descend the mysterious ladder, as Jacob saw the angels in the desert. You ascend from earth to heaven when you unite your spirit to God in prayer. You descend from heaven to earth, when you bring to men the orders of the Lord and his word.” (Bossuet.) It is strange that they allege as excuses, for neglecting the holy intercourse with God, precisely for the reasons which make it a duty to entertain it constantly. Is it from ourselves that we expect the success of our studies, of our ministry, or of our apostolic labors ? Do we believe truly in that oracle of Jesus Christ, “*Sine me nihil potestis facere ?*” Will God grant to our presumption, to our sloth, what he has only promised to humble prayer, generous efforts, and the groanings of our hearts ? It is in loving conversation with God that we must negotiate our sanctification, and the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER II.

TWO GREAT MEANS TO REMAIN UNITED WITH GOD.

The first means, which the saints used to remain united with God, was to acquire the spirit of prayer: by the practice of frequent ejaculatory prayers; by detachment from earthly things; and, by asking God for it.

A. *The practice of frequent ejaculatory prayers.*

The successful man in every calling, whether literary, scientific, or commercial, is he who can say: "This one thing I do constantly." When Michael Angelo was asked why he did not marry, he replied: "Painting is my wife, and my works are my children." He became a great painter because he was a whole man at one thing. He touched and retouched the canvas hundreds of times to produce a good painting. Thousands of men have failed in life by dabbling in too many things. To do anything perfectly, there should be an exclusiveness, a bigotry, a blindness of attachment, to that one object, which should make all other objects for the time being seem worthless.

This is the first law of success in worldly pursuits. It is also the first law of success in spiritual pursuits, in the road of perfection. To become virtuous we must constantly repeat the acts of virtue; to become patient we must often repeat the acts of patience; to become strong in faith, in obedience, in holy purity, we must constantly practise the acts of those virtues. In like manner, to become a man of prayer we must often repeat our prayers. This frequent repetition is the law of success. St.

Teresa repeated the offering of herself to God fifty times in a day. St. Martha repeated her prayer a hundred times in the day and a hundred times in the night. St. Francis Borgia also repeated his prayer a hundred times in the day. St. Philip Neri made a kind of rosary of the words, "O God! come to my aid; O Lord! make haste to help me." He recited this rosary sixty times in the day, and taught his penitents to do the same. St. Gertrude repeated the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," three hundred and sixty-five times a day. St. Leonard of Port Maurice recommended himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary two hundred times a day: he used to say that we should not let a moment pass without repeating the words, "Have mercy on me, O Jesus! have mercy on me." He also tells us that he knew a man who repeated this prayer, "Jesus, have mercy on me," one hundred times in less than an hour. St. Bartholomew the Apostle repeated his acts of divine adoration two hundred times every day. St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, made every day three hundred genuflections in adoration of the Blessed Trinity, and he made the sign of the cross one hundred times before each canonical hour. St. Margaret of Cortona repeated the Our Father over a thousand times in the day. St. Alphonsus was accustomed, before going to bed, to repeat his acts of faith, hope, charity, sorrow, etc., ten times. Jesus Christ himself has taught us by his example to repeat our prayers. When the agony and terror of death came upon him in the garden of Olives, he prayed with the greatest earnestness, and uttered again and again the same prayer. We also learn this practice from the blessed in heaven, who do not

cease day and night to sing : "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, who was, who is, and who is to come." The power of prayer does not consist in many words ; it consists rather in repeating constantly the same petition with greater fervor. What is more powerless than the scattered clouds of steam as they rise in the sky ? They are as impotent as the dew-drops that fall nightly upon the earth. But, concentrated and condensed in a steam-boiler, they are able to cut through solid rock, to hurl mountains into the sea, and to bring the antipodes to our doors. If we wish to make our prayer powerful with God, we must continually condense our desires in the boiler of our heart, upon one particular object, one grace that we need most. And, oh ! what a powerful prayer is such a condensed desire with God. Many have become rich by dint of perseverance in humble occupations. The saints became rich in the grace of God, because they persevered in repeating the same prayer. Oneness of aim and the direction of the energies to a single pursuit, while all others are waived aside as profitless, enable the veriest weakling to make his mark where he strikes.

One great means, then, to acquire the spirit of prayer is to practise prayer frequently.

But how is it possible, you ask, for one to pray so much in the course of the day ? St. Alphonsus answers this question. "Give me," says he, "one that truly loves God, and he will know how to do it." It is sweet and agreeable for a loving soul to think of its beloved, and to converse frequently and familiarly with him.

But you will say : "I cannot pray as much as the saints have done ; in order to do this, I should be a saint

myself. If I cannot make progress in prayer unless I do as much as they have done, I must give up all hope of ever acquiring it." Softly, my friend; have a little patience! Rome was not built in a day. The saints did not acquire the spirit of prayer all at once, nor was the practise of prayer natural to them, at first; but they persevered in it in spite of every obstacle, and were at last raised to a high degree of contemplation.

The celebrated missionary of Peru, Father Diego Martinez, who converted so many thousands of heathens by his preaching and virtues, lived in constant communion with God; he used to spend whole nights in prayer. Sometimes he was seen raised in the air even above the tops of the highest trees; at such times he appeared surrounded by a heavenly splendor, and kneeling amid two brilliant columns of fire. But he was not satisfied with praying during the night; he prayed, also, during the entire day. As he was constantly occupied with his missionary labors, he maintained the spirit of prayer and recollection by frequent ejaculatory prayers; these prayers often exceeded four thousand, nay, even five thousand, a day. He acquired this wonderful spirit of prayer only by slow degrees. On entering the novitiate, he resolved to raise his heart to God seven times in the day. After some time he increased this number of ejaculations to one hundred every day, and, before the end of the novitiate, to five hundred. At last this manner of praying became so familiar to him, that the number of his ejaculations amounted to four or five thousand every day.

The saints made use of short and fervent ejaculations as one of the most efficacious means to acquire the spirit

of prayer. You, too, will make great progress in this all-important virtue, provided you make use of this means as the saints did,—with fervor and perseverance.

But you will ask, How can I count my ejaculations and aspirations? It is too troublesome! I answer, If you truly love your soul you will soon find out a way to count them, just as well as a merchant knows how to count every cent he spends or receives. In order to do this, you may make use of beads after the example of St. Philip Neri, or you may count your ejaculations on your fingers, or by the hours of the day, making a stated number of them during each hour. It is advisable for you to count your ejaculations, in order to know whether you make progress in prayer. Should you have resolved to say five times in the day the “Our Father,” or “Hail Mary,” or “Lord, come to my aid,” or “Jesus, have mercy on me,” or “Jesus, give me the spirit of prayer,” or any other aspiration of the kind, be careful to do so. As soon as you have acquired a facility in making the proposed number in an hour, raise this number to ten. After having succeeded in regularly making ten an hour, increase the number again, and so on until this manner of prayer has become natural to you, and even a real want of your soul. Should you at first feel no relish in making these ejaculations, continue, nevertheless, until you have acquired the salutary habit of praying everywhere, and by degrees you will, like the saints, be raised to a higher and more perfect form of prayer and contemplation.

B. *Detachment from earthly things.*—In order to make rapid progress in prayer, you must imitate those who are earnestly engaged in the study of sciences, or of fine

arts ; you will find that such persons lay aside everything that is not connected with their study. To this are directed all their thoughts and all their efforts, by day and by night. Now if you wish to acquire the spirit of prayer in a short time, you, too, must lay aside everything that could hinder you in acquiring this spirit. Give up useless visits, vain and dangerous amusements. If you wish to make rapid progress in the spirit of prayer, you must practise self-denial ; you must repress your inordinate inclinations. You must detach your heart from the comforts and pleasures of this life ; you must not seek the praise of men, nor desire to do your own will in everything. You must mortify that idle curiosity which prompts you to see and hear everything that passes around you. As long as you do not strive earnestly to detach your heart from everything in this world, you will always have to complain of coldness in prayer, and even of great repugnances to the practices of devotion. You cannot gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. As you sow, so you shall reap. If the wheat which you put into the mill is worthless, the flour which comes from the mill will also be worthless. Your heart will be where your treasure is, says our Lord in the Gospel. The devil is well aware of this truth. In order to prevent you from praying, he will place before your mind, when you are engaged in prayer, those objects to which you are most attached.

Your facility in prayer, and your attraction for it, will increase in proportion to the efforts you make to detach yourself from all earthly things, especially from yourself. One day Christopher Gonsalve, S. J., a disciple of blessed Balthazar Alvarez, was asked by one of his fellow-students

to tell him by what means he had obtained the extraordinary gift of prayer. He answered : “ This did not cost me very much ; I had only to follow the inspiration of God, to mortify and renounce entirely my desire of vain glory in scientific matters. I began my philosophical studies with an unusual facility. I gained great pre-eminence over all my companions. This superiority of talent was a strong lever to ambition, and a source of constant temptation to me. In order to escape these dangerous snares the more securely, I felt inspired to adopt the following means, without, however, neglecting my studies : to cause my companions to lose the high opinion they entertained of my superior talents, I often asked them an explanation of certain points which I understood, perhaps, better than they did. In controversies, I simply gave my opinion, but appeared to be at a loss how to corroborate it ; when objections were made, I answered the first, but for the second I pretended to have no answer : the consequence was that my professors and fellow-students lost the good opinion they had conceived of my talents, and that my professors gave the most difficult and most honorable theses to others, and to me only such as were very easy, and not productive of any honor. Now this was exactly what I desired and aimed at ; for I thus gained a complete victory over self-love and ambition, in recompense for which God bestowed upon me the inestimable gift of sublime contemplation, and great familiarity with him in prayer.”

Thus is true what the Lord said of the prophet Isaias : “ If thou turn away thy foot from doing thy own will . . . thou shalt be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob, thy father. For the mouth of

the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaias lviii, 13, 14.) Now this promise of the Lord will come true in your regard, also, provided you comply with the conditions, namely, to purify your heart from all attachment to earthly enjoyments, ambitions, and desires, but especially from all attachment to your own will and judgment. "Yes," says St. Francis de Sales, "God is ready to grant you the gift of prayer, as soon as he sees you empty of your own self-will. If you be very humble, he will not fail to pour it out upon your soul. God will fill your vessel with his ointments, as soon as it is empty of the ointments of this world; that is, as soon as every desire of yours for earthly objects has made room for that of serving and loving him alone."

C. *Ask God for the spirit of prayer.*—The use of frequent and fervent ejaculatory prayers, and the complete detachment of your heart from all creatures, are, it is true, a most powerful means to acquire the spirit of prayer. But in order the more quickly to obtain this inexpressible gift, you must frequently beg it of God; for this grace of prayer is, as St. Francis de Sales assures us, no water of this earth, but of heaven. Therefore you cannot obtain it by any effort of your own, although it be true that you should carefully dispose yourself for the reception of this grace. This care should indeed be great, but humble and calm. You must keep your heart open, waiting for the fall of this heavenly dew, which will fall so much the sooner, the more earnestly and perseveringly you pray and sigh for it every day, especially when you are celebrating the divine Sacrifice of Mass, and visit our most loving Lord in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. Then you must say to him: "Lord, teach me how to

pray. Grant me the spirit of prayer, and a great love for this holy exercise. Make me often think of Thee, and find my greatest pleasure and happiness in conversing with Thee : let everything of this world become disgusting to me."

The more frequently and earnestly you make these, or similar petitions, to obtain the spirit of prayer, the more you will receive of this inestimable gift of the Lord, according to the infallible promise of Jesus Christ : " All things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matt. xxi, 22.) Continue thus to ask, until the Lord will accomplish in you what he has promised by the prophet Zacharias : " I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers." (Chap. xii, 10.) You clearly perceive, from these words of the prophet, that this gift of prayer is the spirit and gift of the Lord. You must, then, endeavor to obtain it more by asking it of the Lord with great humility, fervor, confidence, and perseverance, than by imprudent efforts of the brain and mind.

Wait patiently for the hour, but do not neglect to do, at the same time, what has been said in this chapter, and then rest assured that the moment will come in which the conversation with God will be easier to you than the conversation with your most intimate friend; and you will exclaim with St. Augustine : " What is more excellent, more profitable, more sublime, and sweeter for the soul, than prayer." You will, with Father Sanchez and Suarez, of the Society of Jesus, prefer the loss of all temporal goods to one hour of prayer, for then will be realized in you what St. Paul says in his epistle to the Romans : " The spirit also helpeth our infirmity ; for we

know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." (Chap. viii. 26.) Then the Holy Ghost himself will pray in you and with you, inspiring such petitions and sighs as are pleasing to and heard by him. And when the Lord, in his great mercy, has granted you this admirable gift, daily return him thanks for it, and profit by it, both for your own temporal and spiritual welfare, and that of others.

Say often with the Psalmist: "Take not thy holy spirit from me." (Ps. i. 13.) Lord, never withdraw from me this spirit of grace and prayer; send me any other punishment for my sins rather than this. I repeat again, never forget to be thankful for this gift, always remembering that you can never fully understand or sufficiently appreciate it until after death. In this gift are included all the gifts and graces of the Lord. Be therefore very desirous to obtain it, and take every possible means to acquire it. You should not take less pains, care and trouble, or make less efforts to obtain this great gift from God, than a good student does to learn a language, an architect to erect a costly and splendid edifice, or a general to gain the victory in an important battle. Would to God you understood this great and inestimable grace as perfectly and clearly as the devil does! I think you would take as much trouble to acquire it, and to preserve it when acquired, as he does to prevent you from receiving it, and to make you lose it when you are in its possession.

This sworn arch-enemy of our eternal happiness will suffer you to perform any kind of good works, such as fasting, scourging yourself, wearing haircloth, preaching,

attending the sick, etc., rather than see you striving to advance in prayer ; the least time you spend in it is for him an insupportable torment. Although he leaves you quiet at all other times, rest assured that in the time of prayer he will use all his power to distract and disturb you in some way or other. In order to prevent you from praying well, he will fill your mind with thoughts and imaginations of the strangest and most curious kind. Things that you never think of at any other time will come to your mind at the time of prayer. You will think that you came to prayer for no other purpose than to be distracted and assaulted by a whole army of the most frightful temptations. Satan will make you feel peevish, and try to persuade you that prayer is the business of monks and nuns, who have more time for it ; but that for you it is only a loss of time which could be spent much more profitable in some other way. He will artfully represent to you how necessary and profitable it is to possess great learning, for the salvation of souls and the greater honor and glory of God, in order that the application to study may become your principal occupation, and that you may consider prayer as something merely accessory. If a Superior in a conference, a confessor in the confessional, or a priest in a sermon, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, his apostles, and all the saints, and in accordance with the spirit of the Church repeatedly insists upon the necessity of prayer, the devil will not be slow to suggest : Oh, that Superior, that priest, knows but one rule, but one obligation. He does not care for science, or consider the country and times in which we are living. If you do what he says you will never be anything but a real hypocrite and devotee.

Should this malignant enemy not succeed by these and similar artifices to prevent you from praying he will then try other means. To St. Anthony the hermit, when at prayer, he used to appear under the most hideous forms to frighten him. He sometimes seized St. Frances of Rome, shook her, and threw her on the ground. When St. Rose of Lima was at prayer, the devil would come and make a great noise, by taking hold of a basket and jumping about with it. He would often cast large hail-stones upon the two holy brothers Simplician and Roman when they knelt down to pray, in order to make them give up prayer, as is related by St. Gregory of Tours.

This implacable hatred and incessant war of Satan against prayer should alone be sufficient to convince you of the necessity, importance, utility and sublimity of this holy exercise; and at the same time urge you to apply to it with all possible diligence, that you may the sooner acquire the spirit of prayer. Read the life of the seraphic St. Teresa, that great mistress of prayer, and you will find how she struggled for eighteen years to obtain this spirit of prayer. We read of St. Catharine of Bologna, that when she was Abbess, one of her daughters, seeing that her whole time was taken up with business, or by the intercourse she was obliged to have with the servants and strangers, asked her how, with her weak health, she could endure so many fatigues and cares. "Know, my daughter," replied the holy Mother, "and be assured that my mind is so occupied with the things which are not of this world, that at whatever hour or moment I wish, I am immediately united with God and separated from everything bodily and temporal. I con-

ness that this has cost me innumerable sufferings, for the road of virtue is narrow and hard ; but, by perseverance, prayer has become my life, my nurse, my mistress, my consolation, my refreshment, my rest, my fortune, all my wealth. It is prayer that has preserved me from mortal sins and rescued me from death ; but it has done more than that : it has nourished me as a tender mother nourishes her infant with milk. I ought to add, too, that prayer drives away all distractions and temptations, gives us the desire of doing penance, enkindles in us the divine love, and, finally, that there is no surer road to perfection."

All the saints, were they to come down from heaven, would, with St. Catharine of Bologna, make the same acknowledgment. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and those that use this holy violence will bear it away. Let us, like the saints, use this salutary coercion in regard to ourselves ; it will prove to us a source of joy for all eternity. Let us, in imitation of the saints, often read a chapter on the great necessity, importance, advantages and efficacy of prayer, thereby to encourage ourselves constantly to persevere and increase in fervent love for this holy occupation. Let us be firmly convinced that such reading will be more profitable to us than any other, whatever it may be. Let us, also, often make our particular examination of conscience on this subject, and let us firmly believe to be true what I one day heard said by a very holy priest, who was so much given to prayer as to be often elevated in the air whilst engaged in devotion. "Any one," said he, "who would carefully make his particular examination of conscience for half a year, would not fail to attain to contemplation."

Suppose the Lord would not favor you in prayer as he has favored certain saints, yet be convinced you will always receive far more than you deserve; do what you can, and leave it to him to do with you according to his will. "He hath filled the hungry with good things," exclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Lord not only gives, but overloads with his gifts those who have a real desire for them. Join the deed to your desires for them, by making use of the means here laid down to acquire them, and rest assured God will deal with you in a most liberal manner, in accordance with the promptness of his paternal heart. You will experience what a certain priest has experienced, who said to me one day: "Since I have given myself up to holy prayer, I am quite a different creature." Would to God you did truly relish all that has been said!

If you but knew the gift of God, you would soon see how sweet the Lord is to those who are given to prayer. You will most assuredly find him in this holy exercise, for he opens to those who knock, and gives to those that ask. Give it a fair trial. Say with David, "One thing I have asked of the Lord; this will I seek after," (Ps. xxvi, 4) namely, this gift of prayer, and I will ask for it until it shall be granted to me.

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CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND MEANS TO REMAIN UNITED WITH GOD.

The second great means which the saints used to remain always united with God, was to follow the advice of the Holy Ghost: "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclus. vii, 40.) Now, to remember our last end is to remember death, judgment, hell and heaven; it is to remember what leads us to a happy or an unhappy eternity. "Remember thy last end"—death. What is death? Death is the passage from time to eternity. It is a departure from life, where everything passes away, and an entrance into eternity, where everything is permanent.

Death, in the first place, is absolutely certain.

Secondly, death will come *soon*.

Thirdly, death will separate us from all the goods and pleasures of this world.

Fourthly, death will decide our lot, whether happy or miserable, for all eternity.

Fifthly, the hour of death is uncertain.

1. Death will come for *certain*. Faith teaches this truth: *Statutum est omnibus hominibus semel mori.* (Heb. ix, 27.) Our body, naturally corruptible, must be dissolved into its primitive elements.

The human body may be compared to a clock. It is composed of so many parts, each one of which is so frail and delicate that the moment one part is seriously injured, the welfare of the whole body is endangered. The

human body is made up of opposing elements continually at war with one another. The instant the due proportion of these elements is destroyed, sickness and death ensue.

This discord can be brought about sometimes by the slightest accident. To be convinced of the extraordinary frailty of the human body, we have but to see it after the soul has quitted it. How quickly it is resolved into its original elements! In fact, if we examine the human body attentively, if we consider the elements of which it is composed—the many extremely sensitive parts of which it is formed, as, for instance, the eye, the heart, the brain, etc., it looks as if it required the interference of God to keep the body together.

Our body is, moreover, exposed to continual dangers. The germs of sickness and death are found in the very air that we breathe, in the food that we eat, in the sudden changes of the weather, in the heat of the summer, and in the cold of the winter. We are exposed to accidents at home and to accidents abroad. We have to visit the sick, no matter how contagious the disease, and so on. Indeed, in the midst of life we are in death. Every day's experience teaches this truth. Everywhere we behold the ravages of death. Every moment of the day, every hour of the night, the death-rattle of a departing soul is heard in some part of the world. It is said that on an average, about eighty thousand persons die every day. Even now, while you are reading this, before you have finished this sentence, a soul has passed from this world, and is standing, trembling and alone, in presence of its eternal Judge. Every tick of the clock, every swing of the pendulum, every throb of the heart, tells us that we

are hastening to the grave. Day and night, in joy or pain, in innocence or sin, our heart is ever beating our funeral march to the grave. The bed on which we lie down at night, reminds us of our grave. The sleep that closes our eyelids, reminds us of the sleep of death.

O, priest of the Most High! you who have grown old in the ministry, how many have you prepared for death? How many ask you nearly every day to pray for their deceased friends and relatives? In heaven there is no death; in hell the reprobates are doomed to a living death, to a life of never-ending torments; on earth we lead a sort of dream-life from which we are awakened to dwell forever either in heaven or in hell.

A tree stood once in the greenwood. It spread forth its verdant branches. The weary traveller often rested beneath its cool shade. At last the tree was felled, cut into planks, prepared in the peaceful workshop. Of one part was made a cradle, and of the other a coffin. The cradle and the coffin both grew together in the same tree year after year. The cradle and the coffin receive the children of men. Alas! how often they are placed side by side, separated scarcely a span. Yet in truth both are but cradles, the one the cradle of our earthly life, the other the cradle of that life which is everlasting.

Oh, what a feeble wall of clay separates us from our eternal Judge, from our final doom! We can truly say every moment of our life: "*Misericordia Domini, quia non sumus consumpti.*" (Thren. iii, 22.)

2. Death will come *soon*. What is man even in the most robust health? A fair fruit at whose core the canker-worm is ever gnawing. What is our life? A spark on the point of being extinguished, a vapor, a light

breeze which disappears and is seen no more. Vapor est ad modicum parens. (Isai. iv, 15.) And it is on this vapor that we build so many beautiful castles!

Every day, every hour of the day, we are drawing nearer and nearer to the grave.

Memor esto, quoniam mors non tardat. (Ecclesi. xiv, 12.) There is but one step between us and death: Uno tantum gradu ego morsque dividimur. (1. Reg. xx 3.) What is life but a continual struggle against death? Why do we sleep? Why do we eat every day? Why do we follow so many rules of health? Why do we send for the physician when we are sick? Is it not in hope to keep death at a distance? But do what you may, death will come; you cannot escape death. We die every day and every moment of the day. Every throb of our heart brings us nearer to the grave. You say, "I am only twenty-five, only thirty years old. Death cannot be so very near yet." Ah! it is not you who have lived twenty-five or thirty years. Say, rather, you are twenty-five or thirty years nearer to your grave. Why then are we so anxious about the things of this world where we are but pilgrims, while we think so little of the world to come, where we must soon dwell forever.

3. *Separation*.—Death tears asunder all the ties that bind us to this world. It separates us from parents, friends, and everything that is near and dear to us. It forces us to leave this world without hope of return. It separates the soul from the body. It ushers the soul into eternity and hides the body in the grave, there to be the food of worms. Death separates us from time and from all the means of salvation.

But does not death leave us anything? Ah, yes; it

leaves us our works ; it leaves us joy or sorrow, according as our works have been, good or evil. O death ! how good are thy counsels ! O mors, bonum est iudicium tuum. (Eccles. xli, 3.) How well dost thou teach us to judge aright of all things, and to regulate our affections according to faith ! How vividly dost thou impress upon us these important truths : Adhærere Deo bonum est. (Ps. lxxii, 28.) Qui adhærit creaturæ, cadit cum labili ; qui amplectitur Jesum, firmabitur in ævum. (Imit. l. 2, c. 7.)

4. *The decisive moment.*—Death is the end of all our labors, the term of our earthly pilgrimage ; the harbor in which we cast anchor, or are wrecked forever. If we die well, we shall be saved eternally. If we die ill, we shall be eternally lost. We can die but once and upon that last decisive moment depends our weal or woe for all eternity. This fearful change that we call death naturally impresses every one with a feeling of awe. The pinched and pallid features, the cold and clammy skin, the heaving chest, the laborious, rattling respiration, and the irresistible force of that disease which no earthly remedies can overcome, speak of something appalling, and suggest the idea of an Almighty power manifesting displeasure and inflicting punishment.

The Lord himself assures us that “wherever the tree falleth there it shall lie.” In whatever condition death overtakes us, it shall fix us there forever. If death finds us in mortal sin, it shall fix our will in sin forever. Perire semel æternum est. (St. Bern.) O momentum, unde pendet æternitas ! Wert thou always present to my mind, every moment of my life would be sanctified !

5. *The hour of death is uncertain.*—Death will cer-

tainly come. But when *shall* it come? Shall I have some days, or at least some hours to prepare myself for this dread passage from time to eternity? Will my death be calm, or will it be violent? Will it be slow or will it be sudden? Shall I have the consolations of religion, or shall I die deprived of all consolation? These are secrets which God in his mercy hides from us. "Vigilate!" he says, "Estote parati." By this uncertainty God keeps us in a happy state of dependence. By hiding from us the time of our death, he obliges us to watch over ourselves constantly and to serve him faithfully every moment of our earthly life. We read and hear of so many priests dying suddenly. Does not their sudden death tell us that we must be always prepared?

Some time ago a certain priest went to administer the last sacraments to a dying person. On his way thither he fell sick and died. Another priest expired one day in the confessional. He was about to judge his penitent and in that very moment he was judged himself. Another priest was preaching one day in the church. All of a sudden he was silent; he dropped dead. Another priest had just recommended the deceased of his parish to the prayers of the congregation. In coming down from the pulpit he slipped and fell dead. The celebrated Maldonat prepared himself five times a day for his passage from time to eternity. He was at last found dead in his bed. Archbishop Kenrick of Baltimore was found dead in his bed. Bishop Newman of Philadelphia died suddenly on the street. The brother of Archbishop Spalding, vicar-general of Louisville, was burned alive in his bed. Bishop Young of Erie died suddenly. Bishop O'Reilly of Hartford perished on the ocean. Three

Redemptorist Fathers were drowned. Father O'Callaghan, S. J., died suddenly on the ocean. One of the priests who attended the funeral of Rev. Father Dunn of Chicago met with an accident on the railroad and died. Father Kearny of Philadelphia went with his congregation on an excursion and was killed instantly with many of his parishioners. In the life of St. Alphonsus we read of a priest who commenced Mass and at the words: "Judica me Deus!" fell dead. Rev. Father Egan died suddenly in Minersville, Pa., Rev. Angelo Paresce, S. J., died suddenly of paralysis, at Woodstock, Md. Rev. John A. Logue went to see his sick brother. While talking with him, he began to feel unwell. He lay down on the bed beside his brother and died almost instantly.

Some time ago Rev. Francis P. O'Neill went to Saratoga. He was somewhat fatigued from his journey, but after a good night's rest he arose refreshed and in excellent health. After performing his usual morning devotions he partook of breakfast, and went for a short ride to the sulphur springs, where he had a bath. Returning to his room at the hotel, he remarked, in answer to an inquiry from Father McElhone, who accompanied him, that he never felt better in all his life. He then seated himself in an arm-chair and resumed the reading of his office. While he was thus occupied Father McElhone's attention was attracted elsewhere. Suddenly the latter heard a peculiar noise, as if Father O'Neill were gargling his throat, and, turning around, he asked him why he was doing that. Receiving no answer, he went over to where Father O'Neill was sitting, when he perceived that he was in convulsions. Father McElhone,

hastily stripping his friend of coat, vest and collar, called for medical help, which, though close at hand, arrived too late, as the spirit had fled, though not before the dying priest had been anointed by Father McElhone. The physician pronounced the cause of death to be apoplexy."

The Venerable and Right Rev. Bishop of Salta, Father Buenaventura Risso Patron, died suddenly, of heart disease.

Rev. Father Mulholland was going down to supper one Saturday evening when he slipped, fell headlong, and expired. Rev. Father Noll of Lafayette, Ind., died suddenly towards the close of a mission given in his church. Rev. Father John De Dycker, C.S.S.R., was found dead in his bed.

The Moruya (Australia) *Examiner* of December 24, 1884, says: "At about 8 o'clock on Sunday night, when most of our townsfolk were attending church service, a thrill ran through every heart as the sad tidings spread from door to door, that Father Pollard had fallen down dead on the altar, while in the very act of preaching. From one who was present we gather the following particulars: Father Pollard came into church on Sunday night, apparently in the usual state of health, and after the customary prayers, ascended the altar to preach. After some preliminary remarks, he proceeded to deliver a characteristically calm but earnest discourse upon the great importance of preparing at this season for the coming of Our Lord. Urging his hearers 'to make straight the way of the Lord,' he said: 'Let us devote the few remaining days before his coming to set our houses in order; let us make one final effort—' He sud-

denly stopped, made a motion with his hand, and then immediately fell forward across the altar rails. Two or three of the congregation sprang towards him, and raised the body from the floor, but one glance at the rigid face, with fixed eyes gazing glassily upward, told that the heart had ceased to beat.

“*Mors subitanea, mors sacerdotum.*” (Bishop Wittmann.) How, then, can any one live on in sin? How can any one live for days and weeks in a state in which he would not wish to die? *Vigilate, quia nescitis diem, neque horam. Estote parati.*

In the Litany of the Saints, the Church teaches us to beg of God to preserve us from a sudden and unprovided death. A death that is sudden but not unprovided is often a great blessing; for it gives little or no time to the devil to tempt us. Death is terrible only when it is unprovided. Our death may be sudden, but let us take care that it be not an unprovided death. Only he, therefore, is truly wise who constantly keeps his soul in his hands, and who is always ready to give it back into the hands of God. *Anima mea in manibus meis semper.* (Ps. cxviii.)

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST FORERUNNER OF AN UNHAPPY DEATH— LUKEWARMNESS.

What is lukewarmness?

“*Tepidus est*,” says Menochius in Apoc. iii, 16, “*qui non audet Deum mortaliter offendere, sed perfectionis vitæ studium negligit.*”

“He is lukewarm,” says St. Augustine, “who does not love God above all things.”

By lukewarmness, then, we mean sloth in the service of God. You will find among ordinary Christians, and even among the clergy, some who wish to serve two masters—God and the world. They do not wish exactly to commit mortal sin, yet they commit venial sins often deliberately and without scruple. The lukewarm priest is not much troubled about his past sins. He says to himself: “Well, if I do not do all the good I can, at least I do not do much harm.”

The lukewarm priest commits many venial sins, it is true, but still he does not commit any mortal sin. He cannot boast of any particular virtue, but neither has he any glaring vice.

The lukewarm priest commits the same faults habitually, and without scruple. He sometimes tells untruths, is apt to exaggerate greatly; is sometimes guilty of excess, especially in drinking. He criticises the actions of his Superiors; makes some uncharitable remarks about confrères and parishioners; and is sometimes a

little too free in his language ; uses words of double meaning, utters unbecoming jests ; is not careful enough in guarding the sacred seal of confession. He leads a rather worldly life, full of distractions ; nourishes in his heart dangerous desires ; does not struggle manfully against temptation ; is full of self-conceit ; and is often guarded by human respect. He cannot brook the slightest contradiction, the least offensive word. He is rather inclined to be rationalistic, laughs at and despises those of his brethren whom he considers pious. He looks upon them as narrow-minded and scrupulous. He makes light of such devotions as the scapular, the rosary, etc. He is not very strict in observing the rubrics. He rushes through his breviary with little attention and devotion. He confesses but seldom, and even then with little preparation. He hurries through Mass without preparation or thanksgiving, without devotion or recollection.

Yet with all he has no scruples of conscience, because he finds he does some good, performs some acts of virtue.

The lukewarm priest is deceived by the good works he performs. He may possess certain virtues ; he may perform many good works ; but these serve only to convince him that his life is pleasing to God. The bishop of Ephesus, too, was in many things a model of virtue. "*Scio opera tua, et laborem et patientiam tuam, et quia non potes sustinere malos.*" These are the very words of our Lord himself. They certainly contain great praise ; and yet our Lord adds : "*Sed habeo adversum te quod charitatem tuam primam reliquisti. Memor esto unde excideris, et age pœnitentiam, et prima opera fac ; sin autem, venio tibi et movebo candelabrum tuum de loco suo.*" (Apoc. ii, 2, 4.)

The bishop of Laodicea, too, performed many good works. "Dives sum," he says, "et locupletatus, et nullius egeo." Yet our Lord says to him: "Nescis, quia tu es miser, et miserabilis, et pauper, et cæcus. Suadeo tibi emere a me aurum ignitum probatum, ut locuples fias, et vestimentis albis induaris, et non appareat turpitudine tua; et collyria inunge oculos tuos, ut videaris." (Apoc. iii, 17.)

There is a priest who says: "I preach every Sunday; I teach Catechism; I have no trouble in my parish, etc." "Sed habeo adversum te," answers our Lord, quod charitatem primam "reliquisti." "You have lost your first fervor." How do you prepare your sermons? You labor for others. What do you do for your own soul. You labor diligently for others. Is it not because you hate prayer, recollection and study? You have no trouble in your parish. Is it not because you let every one alone and have not the courage to fight against the evil practices that swarm everywhere in your parish? Dumb dogs that cannot bark—woe to the prophet that places cushions under the elbow of sinners. (Ezech.)

"Memor esto, unde excideris, et prima opera fac." Every day you say: "Domum tuam, Domine, decet sanctitudo" (Ps. 92.) And what care do you take of the house of God? Is not your own house neater, cleaner, better furnished than the house of the Lord?

"Memor esto, unde excideris."

You go to the confessional every Saturday. But do you ever go there at any other time? You hear many confessions; but how? Do you help the penitents always to make good confessions, or do you hurry them, so as to get through as soon as possible?

Are there not some, especially of the young people, who make bad confessions ? You hear many confessions ; but how many men are there among them ?

“ Tu dicis, quia dives sum, et locupletatus, et nescis, quia tu es miser et pauper.” “ Per totam noctem laborasti, et nihil cepisti.”

You labor much ; but where is the pure intention ? Do you always labor solely for the honor and glory of God ? The lukewarm priest may labor much, but his motives are merely natural. His actions are not prompted by the inspirations of grace. Hence he makes so little progress in the path of virtue. He preaches to others, but how does he practise what he preaches. He prays in the name of the Church, but does he pray from his heart ? He opens the fountains of grace to others, while he himself has but little thirst for these divine waters. Every day at the altar, he opens heaven to others, while his own heart has no desire for heaven. He can say in truth : “ Undique me circumdat amor ;” but he must also confess, “ Et nescio quid est amor.” (St. Bernard).

Every day our Lord comes down from heaven to cast fire upon his heart, and his heart remains cold ; the fire of divine love will not burn. “ Tot congestis carbonibus, miraculo diabolico tepescimus,” says St. Bonaventure. If a man takes every day the most nourishing food and yet does not get strong, he must certainly be sick ; there must be something wrong.

“ Seminastis multum et intulistis parum.” “ Qui mercedes congregavit misit eas in sacculum pertusum.” (Ag. I, 6.) For all his labors the lukewarm priest shall receive little or no reward, for his motives are merely natural. Yet in spite of all this, the lukewarm priest is

not in the least troubled. He makes no effort to do better. He does not see that he is doing anything wrong. Instead of thinking of the evil that he does, he thinks only of the sins that he avoids. He does not compare himself with those who are better, but with those who are worse than himself; and he feels inclined to thank God that he is not so bad as other people. His conscience may indeed trouble him on account of his want of fidelity in little things, his lack of fervor in the performance of his priestly duties; but he looks upon such things of conscience as vain scruples. All his venial sins are but pardonable weaknesses, such as cannot be avoided in this life. "The spirit is willing," he says, "but the flesh is weak." The precious time that he loses in useless visits, in dangerous amusements, those wilful distractions in prayer, at Mass and during the divine office—all these are but trifles, are in fact unavoidable. "The priest," he says, "is no monk; he has to lead an active life, etc." He forgets that the priest as well as the religious is obliged to strive after perfection.

"The religious life," says St. Thomas, "is a state of perfection, not because religious are bound to be perfect as soon as they enter that state, but because they are strictly obliged to strive after perfection. He, therefore, who does not strive earnestly to acquire perfection is no true religious, because he neglects the very thing for which he became a religious."

Now, if this is true of every religious and even of every lay-brother, it is especially true of every priest; but more especially of every parish priest.

"Per sacrum ordinem deputatur aliquis ad dignissima mysteria, ad quod requiritur major sanctitas interior,

quam requirit etiam religionis status." (2. 2. Qu. 184. a. 8.)

The lukewarm priest, however, takes no notice of all this. The very name "cleric," clergyman, serves to remind him that he has chosen God for his inheritance. By his very office as priest he is bound to lead others to God; he must therefore be perfect himself. Even in the Old Law, God said to his priests: "Eritis mihi sancti quia sanctus ego sum." The Apostle says of every Christian: "Elegit nos, ut essemus sancti, immaculati in conspectu ejus." How much more is this holiness of life required of the priest!

The Church said to him at his Ordination: "Ministros ecclesiæ fide et opere debere esse perfectos. Eluceat in eis totius forma justitiæ." God says to all men, especially to the priest: "Diligis Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo." (Matt. xxii, 27.) Can the priest say honestly that he keeps this great commandment while he commits so many venial sins, while he performs the most sacred functions without attention and devotion? "The heart of the priest," says the pious Blossius, "should be an altar whereon the fire of divine love burns continually." But how long will divine love continue to burn in the heart of him who never adds fuel to the flame, who hardly ever performs any acts of self-denial?

The lukewarm priest dishonors God by his careless life. He acts as if God did not deserve any better service; as if he were sorry that he had chosen the sublime calling of the priesthood. He acts as if heaven were not worth so much sacrifice.

"Estote perfecti," says our Lord, "sicut et pater vester cœlestis perfectus est." (Matt. v, 8.)

“Let him that is just become still more just; let him that is holy, become holier still.” (Apoc. xxii, 11.)

Can the lukewarm priest say that he fulfils this commandment? St. Bernard says that perfection is a constant striving after what is better.” Does the lukewarm priest then strive after perfection?

The priest blames seculars if they behave irreverently in church; if they contribute but little towards the support of their pastor, and so on; and he—how does he treat Almighty God? How does he pay his dues to God?

“Qui sunt Christi,” says St. Paul, “*carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitiis et concupiscentiis.*” (Gal. v, 24.) Wherein does the lukewarm priest crucify his flesh? “Si quis vult post me venire,” says our Lord, “*abneget semetipsum.*” (Matt. xvi, 24.) Wherein does the lukewarm priest deny himself? The lukewarm priest leads a mere natural, immortified life, and yet he pretends to be, not merely a disciple of Christ, but even his very representative. “*Sacerdos alter Christus.*” And still he sees nothing wrong in all this!

The great apostle says: “*Nihil mihi conscius sum. sed non in hoc justificatus sum.*” (I Cor. iv, 4.) The good Christian trembles even at the very shadow of sin; and this holy fear is in reality the greatest safeguard. “*Beatus homo qui semper est pavidus,*” says Holy Writ. (Prov. xxviii, 14.) And the lukewarm priest commits thousands of venial sins without being in the least disturbed! He who willingly crowns our Lord with the thorns of venial sin will soon also nail him to the cross by mortal sin! “*Qui spernit modica, paulatim decidet.*” (Eccl. xix, 1.)

He who takes no notice of slight habitual faults, shall lose by degrees the spirit of prayer and recollection, and shall finally fall into mortal sin. "Judicio divino," says St. Isidore, "in reatum nequiores labuntur, qui distringere minora sua facta contemnunt." (Sent. l. 2. c. 19.)

It is true that only mortal sin destroys the life of the soul; that any number of venial sins (except of course in case of injustice) will never amount to a mortal sin; but, as St. Gregory says, "Venial sins committed habitually and without scruple destroy at last the horror of sin that should always animate us. If this horror of sin is lost, the soul will soon fall into mortal sin."

One grain of sand will not sink a man in the river, no, not even twenty; but if you fill a large sack even with the finest grains of sand and tie it around a man's neck it will sink him just as well as a mill-stone.

We see from daily experience that no one becomes very bad or very good all at once. These changes for better or for worse are gradual.

The dividing line between mortal and venial sin is so easily passed over by those who are in the habit of wilfully committing venial sins. Even the awful sins of apostasy and final impenitence usually begin with slight faults.

"Qui spernit modica, paulatim decidet." (Eccl. xix, 1.)

Spiritual blindness and hardness of heart begin generally with slight faults. One fault leads to another; and as the faults increase, God's grace is gradually withdrawn. Each new fault therefore becomes more dangerous than the foregoing. Every new abuse of grace serves only to harden the heart.

The most terrible of all is when this abuse of grace

becomes habitual. The conscience becomes seared. The ordinary graces of God seem no longer to affect it. Such was the case with the unhappy Judas. Such is, in brief, the history of every lukewarm priest. *Qui spernit modica, paulatim decidet.* This continual abuse of grace, this gradual withdrawal of grace leads nearly always to great sins, and even to final impenitence.

The habit of falling again and again into the same sins, undermines the hope of ever rising again and finally leads to impenitence. The ever relapsing sinner declares at last that it is impossible to lead a virtuous life.

Of course, with God all things are possible. An extraordinary grace might help the sinner to rise once more from the degrading slavery of his passions; but God does not always offer this extraordinary grace. In fact, the sinner himself has not the courage to ask for it, and even were it offered, he would not make the proper use of it.

If it is difficult to remain fervent, it is far more difficult to regain our fervor when once it is lost.

One of the most terrible effects of these spiritual chastisements is that they are often scarcely noticed by those on whom they fall. A blind man knows and feels his blindness, and therefore he gladly takes the hand of the friend who leads him, but he that is spiritually blind, imagines that he sees as well as any one else; and even if he does sometimes feel his blindness he chooses for his leader one as blind as himself, and so they both fall at last into the ditch.

“He who does not advance in the path of virtue,” says St. Bernard, “necessarily goes back.” “He that

puts his hand to the plough and looks back," says our Lord, "is not fit for the kingdom of heaven." (Luke ix, 62). These words of our Lord should cause us to tremble. "The moment we cease to go forward on the path of perfection," says St. Augustine, "we begin to recede." The moment we cease rowing against the stream, the current carries us down the river.

God alone is immutable. "Ego Dominus, et non mutor." (Mal. iii, 6.) Man is continually changing. "Nunquam in eodem statu permanet." (Job xiv, 2.) The Evangelist tells us: "Jesus proficiebat sapientia et ætate apud Deum et homines." (Luke ii, 52). If we wish, then, to be disciples of Jesus, we must go on continually on the path of virtue. If we stand still, Jesus will pass on and leave us behind.

Lukewarmness may be compared with consumption. Consumption is of all diseases one of the hardest to cure. It nearly always ends in death. The consumptive gradually loses his appetite; he grows every day weaker; but as he does not suffer much pain; as death steals on gradually, the sick man will not believe that there is any great danger. Hence it is that consumptive persons very often put off the reception of the last Sacraments until it is too late.

It is precisely the same with the lukewarm priest. He gradually loses all liking for prayer and the exercises of piety. He recites the prayers of the Church merely because he must. His spiritual strength is gradually exhausted because he does not take sufficient spiritual nourishment. Even the nourishment he takes is infected by the poison of lukewarmness.

The inclination to evil grows stronger; his love of

virtue grows weaker. At last the crisis comes. A great temptation assails him, and he falls into mortal sin. He was warned often enough, but he did not heed the warning. It had been perhaps better for him, had he fallen into some grievous sin at the very beginning of his lukewarm career; for then he might have been terrified; he might have given up sin and done penance. "*Utinam frigidus esses,*" says our Lord to the lukewarm bishop of Laodicea. If you were cold and dead in sin, then indeed I might have compassion on you, because then you would see and acknowledge your misery. But now you are neither warm nor cold: I cannot help you, for you will not amend.

"*Licet frigidus pejor sit tepido,*" says Cornelius a Lapide, "*tamen pejor est status tepidi, quia tepidus est in majori periculo ruendi sine spe resurgendi.*" (In Apoc. iii, 13.)

"It is easier," says St. Bernard, "to convert a depraved worldling than a lukewarm priest." And Cassian says: "*Frequenter vidimus de frigidis ad spiritalem pervenire fervorem, de tepidis omnino non videmus.*" (Coll. 4, c. 10.) The lukewarm priest is, indeed, in the greatest danger of being lost forever.

"My beloved had a vineyard on a fruitful hill. He hedged it in, gathered away the stones and planted chosen vines therein. He built a watch-tower in the midst thereof and placed a wine-press therein, and he expected that the vineyard would bear good grapes and it brought forth only wild and sour ones. And now judge between me and my vineyard. What more could I do to my vineyard than I have done? I expected that it would bear good grapes, why then has it brought forth

only sour ones ? And now I will show you what I shall do to my vineyard. I shall remove its hedges and suffer it to be robbed of its fruits. I shall tear down its walls and suffer it to be trampled in the dust. I shall turn it into a desert. Never more shall it be either pruned or tilled. Thorns and thistles shall grow therein, and I shall forbid the clouds to rain thereon." (Isai. v, 1.)

This parable needs no explanation. It is plain enough. Who are those of whom our Lord speaks in the parable ? Who are they who have to fear these just and terrible chastisements ? They are all those who have received many extraordinary graces and have neglected to profit by them ; who, instead of becoming better, have only grown more lukewarm, more sinful. All these can easily recognize their image in the parable of the unfruitful vineyard. But the parable represents especially those who have consecrated themselves to the service of God, that is, the priests. The priests are in a special manner the vineyard of the Lord. They have been planted by his own divine hand, and abundantly watered by the ever flowing fountains of his grace.

When God called the priest to his service, he gave him all the graces he needed. He gave him in fact not only the necessary graces, but even graces superabundant and extraordinary. God enlightened and strengthened the priest internally by his Holy Spirit, and protected him externally by separating him from the world, and freeing him from family cares. God opened to the priest an inexhaustible fountain of grace by obliging him to recite every day the divine office, to offer up, at least every Sunday and holyday, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, by giving him power to administer the sacra-

ments. By these means the priest should sanctify others, but especially he should sanctify himself. He should give others to drink "*de fontibus Salvatoris*," but especially he should drink himself to his heart's fill. "God has made him rich in all things so that no grace is wanting to him." What more, in fact, could he do for us than he has done ?

But will God continue to waste his graces on him who coldly neglects them ? Shall the dew of heaven fall forever on that barren soil that bears only poison-weed ? The lukewarm priest offers a divine sacrifice as often as he celebrates Mass ; but he will himself make no sacrifice. "*Non apparebis in conspectu meo vacuus*," (Exod. xxiii, 15) says the Lord to the priests of the Old Law. How much more does he require this of the priests of the New Law ? We must sacrifice every day not only the Sacred Body of our Lord, but also our own bodies. "*Obsecro vos, fratres*," says the Apostle, "*per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctum Deo placentem*." (Rom. xii, 1.) We must sacrifice ourselves every day ; we must sacrifice our evil inclinations, our dislikes, our sensual desires and attachments, our spiritual sloth, and so on—we must offer these daily on the altar, together with the sacrifice of our Lord's Body and Blood. "*Non apparebis vacuus*." The holy sacrifice will sanctify us in proportion to the sacrifice we make of ourselves every day. "*Qui parce seminat, parce et metet*." (I Cor. ix, 6.) If the priest does not give to God what he can give, what he is obliged to give, can he complain if God withholds from him those tender marks of friendship which he bestows only on faithful souls ? Of such a priest the prophet says

truly: "*Calcabis olivam et non ungeris oleo.*" (Mch. vi, 15.)

If the rain and dew fall upon ground that has been trampled upon, they cannot penetrate; they only make the ground harder. The ground must be ploughed up and made brittle before the rain and dew can penetrate. It is precisely so in the spiritual life. If our hearts are not continually softened by self-denial and self-sacrifice, the grace of God cannot penetrate them. God's grace falling upon them in vain, they become only more hardened.

This is precisely the fate of the lukewarm priest. The grace of God falls continually on his heart; but his heart is hardened. God's grace cannot penetrate. Every good seed that is sown there dies out, so that his heart becomes at last like a barren desert. *Quid est, quod debui facere vineæ meæ et non feci?* (Isai. v, 4.)

God wishes that we should thank him for his graces, that we should co-operate with them. It is only on this condition that he gives us more and greater graces. God takes away the talent from the slothful servant, and gives it to him who is diligent. "*Omni habenti dabitur et abundabit; ei autem qui non habet, et quod videtur habere, auferetur ab eo.*" (Matt. xxv, 29.)

"*Malos male perdet, et vineam suam locabit aliis agricolis, qui reddent ei fructum temporibus suis.*" (Matt. xxi, 41.)

"*Ideo dico vobis, quia auferetur a vobis regnum Dei et dabitur genti facienti fructus ejus.*"

God is disgusted with the lukewarm priest. He gradually withdraws his grace from him. He withdraws from the lukewarm priest that spiritual unction which enables the good priest to overcome his natural sloth and

to find pleasure in the prayers and other spiritual exercises of his office. Hence the unhappy man often omits these prayers altogether or recites them only with weariness and disgust.

Finally, God withdraws from him even those special graces that he needs to fulfil his duties properly. God abandons him to his fate just as the physician gives up the confirmed invalid. "*Incipiam te vomere.*" The very expression shows how hateful to God is this sin of lukewarmness, and how difficult it is for the lukewarm priest to return to the friendship of God.

Our Lord is full of mercy towards all. He invites even the greatest sinners. "*Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis.*" And yet he says to the lukewarm priest: "*Incipiam te vomere.*"

But what crime has the lukewarm priest committed? Our Lord answers, "*Quia tepidus es.*"

The useless servant is punished like the malefactor. "*Inutilem servum ejicite in tenebras exteriores; illic erit fletus et stridor dentium.*" (Matt. xxv, 30.) But what great crime had this servant committed? His sole crime was that he buried his talent. He was a useless servant.

What crime did the foolish virgins commit that they were forever excluded from the marriage-feast? They were virgins. Our Lord himself calls them virgins. Why then were they excluded? They tell us themselves: "*Lampades nostræ extinguuntur.*" (Matt. xxv, 4.) They slept when they should have been watching. They neglected to keep in their lamps the oil of good works. They allowed the fire of divine love to die out in their hearts, and therefore they heard the terrible words: "*Nescio vos.*"

Why did our Lord curse the barren fig tree? Jesus was hungry; he sought for fruit and found nothing but leaves. What sentence did our Lord pass on this tree? "*Nunquam ex te fructus nascatur in æternum.*" (Matt. xxi, 19.)

Custos, quid de nocte? What mean those signs of approaching night? That weak faith, that want of relish for the supernatural, that disgust and weariness in prayer, those wilful distractions, that irreverence during holy Mass, and while reciting the breviary, that secret longing for the flesh pots of Egypt, for the gay pleasures of the world, that regret for having chosen the rigorous life of the priest—what mean all these? Are they not signs that God has abandoned or is about to abandon his faithless, unworthy servant? Has not, then, the lukewarm priest every reason to fear the terrible words of the prophet: "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has also rejected thee." (I Kings xv, 46.) Has he not reason to fear that God will abandon him as he abandoned the unfruitful vineyard?

Sister Anne of the Incarnation, a Carmelite nun, had a vision of a soul in hell. This lost soul was tortured by various kinds of hideous monsters, representing the various sins for which she was condemned. Some of these monsters kept repeating to the lost soul: "With us you began." Others cried out: "With us you continued." And other monsters added: "With us you ended."

"*Etiam Domine, Deus Omnipotens, vera et justa judicia tua.*" (Apoc. xvi, 7.)

Why does God seem to neglect certain nations and send no one to preach the Gospel to them; why does God permit some sinners to die immediately after their

first mortal sin ; why does God give more graces to one than another ? These are mysteries that we cannot fathom. At the sight of such mysteries we can only exclaim : “ *O altitudo divitiarum sapientiæ et scientiæ Dei ! Quam incomprehensibilia sunt judicia ejus.* ” (Rom. xi, 33.) But that God should punish him who has, for years, been guilty of the blackest ingratitude ; who has, for years, dishonored God and ruined souls ; that God should at last punish such a one is surely no mystery. The mystery is rather that God waited so long. “ *Deus, qui potentiam parcendo maxime et miserando manifestas.* ” (Dom. x, p. Pent.)

But must the lukewarm priest lose courage, and, as it were, give way to despair ? By no means.

We lose much, indeed, by lukewarmness ; but one thing we do not lose,—the possibility of regaining our lost fervor, and even of becoming saints. The greatest misfortune that could befall us would be to despair.

As long as we live on this earth the infinite treasures of God’s mercy are ever open to us. We can still obtain the grace to become zealous and fervent priests.

Our Lord says : “ Thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot ; but because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. ” (Apoc. iii, 15, 16.) From these words we see that the rejection is not yet complete, but it is begun, and it must come at last, if we do not enter into ourselves in due time. Our dear Lord teaches us that lukewarmness is not an incurable malady, but it is from him alone that we must seek the cure. “ *Suadeo tibi emere a me aurum ignitum.* ” God gives to every one, as St. Alphonsus teaches, the grace to pray. It is true, the lukewarm priest

hates prayer; he finds it so irksome. Well, be it so. Let him do violence to his feelings. He must purchase the fire-tried gold of divine love, no matter what it may cost. He must struggle against his natural sloth. He must pray with perseverance.

The lukewarm priest is "poor and naked and blind," as our Lord declares in the Apocalypse. He is *poor*, because he has little or no merit; he is *naked*, because he has no solid virtue, perhaps not even sanctifying grace. "Nomen habes quod vives," says our Lord, "et mortuus es." (Apoc. iii, 1.) He is *blind* because he does not see the danger in which he lives. By means of prayer, however, he can become rich in grace. "Ut locuples fias." God's grace will clothe him, will open his eyes, and make him see the hideousness of lukewarmness and the beauty and happiness of a life of fervor. God's grace will enable him to abandon the state of lukewarmness and return to the friendship of his divine Master. We must take up again those pious practices which we performed in the first years of the sacred ministry, those years of fervor and peace of heart.

We must pray, we must keep up our pious exercises even if we have no devotion. What St. Augustine says of faith is also true of piety: "Crede et comprehendes." Be constant in the practices of devotion and you will acquire devotion. By neglecting these exercises we gradually lose the spirit of devotion; by resuming them we will gradually regain the spirit of fervor. It may cost us something at first to resume these little practices of devotion, but we shall be well repaid for our trouble, especially if we add good works to our prayer.

"And thy justice shall go before thy face." (Isaias

lviii, 8.) St. Cyprian, commenting on these words of Isaias, says: "That God will listen to and hear those prayers which are joined to good works. The angel of the Lord said to Tobias: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms;" (Tob. xii, 8.) and by the prophet Isaias the Lord says: "Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh." (Isaias lviii, 8.) "Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, protect the fatherless, defend the widow." (Isaias 1.) Then shalt thou call and the Lord shalt hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say: "Here I am." (Isaias lviii.)

And again it is said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" (Matt. v.) especially when they pray; for whosoever is good and liberal to the brethren of Jesus Christ on earth, to him Jesus Christ must be good, and liberal also; for he is infinitely better and more liberal than any one of us can ever be.

"Be, then, watchful in prayer and in the practice of works of penance and charity. If thou wilt not watch and do penance, I will come to thee as a thief and thou shalt not know at what hour I shall come to thee." (Apoc. iii, 23.) "Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not, and he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. . . and Jesus went away and hid himself from them. (John xii, 35, 36.)

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND FORERUNNER OF AN UNHAPPY DEATH— MORTAL SINS.

Quid est quod dilectus meus in domo mea fecit scelera multa. (Jerem. xi, 15.)

No doubt, we all have noticed that the consideration of the most awful truths of faith leaves us sometimes cold and unmoved, while the consideration of these same truths terrifies the good people of the world. We preach to the people of the terrors of judgment, the torments of hell, the hideousness of sin, and the people are moved and filled with a wholesome fear, while we remain cold and unimpressed, as if the eternal truths were but fables. We know well enough the cause of this sad fact. "*Quotidiana vilescent.*" These awful truths are no longer new to us ; we grow accustomed to them at last.

Let us then beg of God to give us special light to understand the enormity of mortal sin in a priest.

According to St. Thomas, mortal sin is "*aversio a Creatore et conversio ad creaturam.*" The essence of sin consists in the free, deliberate renunciation of God and attachment to a creature or to some sinful gratification ; so that the sinner is determined rather to lose God than give up the object of his guilty passions, or renounce that shameful gratification.

St. Thomas asks the question, "*Utrum magnitudo personæ peccantis aggravat peccatum ?*" (1. 2 Qu. 73, a, 10.) and he answers: "*Respondes dicendum quod peccata*

tanto magis alicui imputantur quanto major est. Et hoc potest esse propter quatuor causas :

Primo quidem, quia facilius possunt resistere peccato majores, puta quia excedunt in scientia et virtute, unde Dominus dicit, quod servus sciens voluntatem domini sui, et non faciens, plagis vapulabit multis." (Luke xii.)

Secundo, propter ingratitudinem, quia omne bonum quo aliquis magnificatur, est Dei beneficium, cui homo fit ingratus peccando ; et quantum ad hoc quælibet majoritas peccatum aggravat secundum illud Sapientiæ 6 : Potentes potenter tormenta patientur." Tertio, propter specialem repugnantiam actus peccati ad magnitudinem personæ, sicut si princeps justitiam violet, qui ponitur justitiæ custos, et si sacerdos fornicatur, qui castitatem vovit, and we may add, qui castitatis est custos. Quarto, propter exemplum, sive scandalum, quia, ut Gregorius dicit in pastorali, in exemplum culpa vehementer extenditur, quando pro reverentia gradus peccator honoratur ; ad plurimum etiam notitiam perveniunt peccata magnorum et magis ea homines indigne ferunt."

From this it follows that the sin of the priest is as much greater than that of the layman as the dignity of the priest surpasses that of any other man on earth.

The priest has more light and more grace than other men. On this account his sin is more heinous.

The priest has received so many extraordinary favors from God. Hence, if he sins, he becomes guilty of the blackest ingratitude. The priest has freely bound himself by the most solemn obligations. Hence, by sinning, he becomes guilty of the basest treason. The priest is placed upon the candlestick, exposed to the gaze of all. Hence, his sin gives extraordinary scandal.

I. Propter majorem scientiam et virtutem.

Mortal sin is always detestable and accursed, no matter who commits it. "Maledicti, qui declinant a mandatis tuis." People in the world may indeed excuse themselves by saying that they were ignorant, or weak; but what excuse can the priest give for sinning?

The people of the world sin often through ignorance; they are poorly instructed; they are overwhelmed with worldly cares; they sin often through weakness and ignorance.

The priest, on the contrary, is enlightened. He is the light of the world. "Lux mundi." (Matt. v, 14.) The priest is instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. (Luke viii, 10.) The priest knows well enough how much God deserves to be loved; he knows the malice of mortal sin. "Quo melius videt," says St. Gregory, "eo gravius peccat."

Very often, through ignorance, the people of the world commit only a material sin; but this cannot be the case with the priest. He knows well the circumstances that increase or lessen the malice of sin. He knows what is allowed and what is forbidden. He knows what is mortal sin and what is venial.

Can the priest excuse himself by saying that he had an erroneous conscience? Does he not know that he is not permitted to act in positive doubt? Does he not know the difference between an *actus humanus* and an *actus hominis*? Does he not know the difference between "sensus" and "consensus?" In a word, is he not a priest? Is he not the light of the world?"

And should the unworthy priest excuse himself by saying that he has not the necessary knowledge; I would

ask—"Whose fault is it?" Is he not obliged under pain of sin to have the necessary knowledge? Does not the state of life which he has chosen absolutely require this knowledge? His vocation is to enlighten the world. "*Labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et legem requirunt ea ore ejus.*" (Mal. ii, 7.)

His duty is to proclaim and explain the law of God. He has to defend God's rights. As God's representative he must judge others. He must inquire into the nature and degree of their guilt. He must therefore be thoroughly versed in the law of God. To be ignorant of God's law would be just as criminal in the priest as to break God's law; ay, sometimes even more criminal; for the ignorant priest is like "the blind man leading the blind," and, as our Lord assures us, "both fall at last into the ditch." "O, alium doces et teipsum non doces," says St. Paul, "*propter quod inexcusabilis es*" (Rom. ii, 21.) The priest that sins is therefore inexcusable.

Our Saviour's prayer on the cross is not for him: "*Pater, dimitte illis, non enim sciunt quid faciunt.*"

"*Nulla re Deus magis offenditur,*" says St. Chrysostom, "*quam quando peccatores sacerdotii dignitate præfulgent.*" (In Matt. Hom. 41.) The sin of the priest is, in truth, like that of the fallen angels. Why have the fallen angels been condemned to eternal torments? Precisely because they sinned deliberately and with the full knowledge of the malice of rebellion. The priest too is called in Holy Writ an angel, on account of his superior knowledge. "*Labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam, quia angelus Domini exercituum est.*" (Mal. ii, 7.)

The office of the priest is also precisely that of the angel. He has been consecrated to praise God, to act as

mediator between God and man. Woe to him if he suffers sin to enter the sanctuary, like the fallen angels of old.

One mortal sin is enough to transform him in a moment from an angel of light into a hideous demon.

In many respects the knowledge of the priest surpasses even that which the angels possessed. The angels had never heard of the deluge; they never heard that God died on the cross to atone for sin. But the priest knows all this. The very example of the angels ought to be a warning to him.

"The malice of sin," says St. Thomas, "consists in the fact that it is wilfully and knowingly embraced." (1. 2. Qu. 78, a. 1.) Elsewhere he says: "*Omne peccatum ex malitia est contra Spiritum Sanctum.*" (De Malo, Qu. 3, a. 14.) We know what our Lord says of him who sins against the Holy Ghost. "*Non remittetur ei neque in hoc sæculo neque in futuro.*" (Matt. xii, 32.)

But perhaps the fallen priest can excuse himself by saying that he had not sufficient grace to resist the temptation. But has not the priest the almighty power of God himself at his disposal? Has he not in his hand the keys of the treasury of divine grace? Has not God made him the dispenser of his graces? Has he not then as much grace as he needs, as much as he desires?

Whatever the priest does for the salvation of others is also a fountain of blessings for himself. God protects and strengthens him in every possible way. His priestly dignity, the state of life he has chosen, the very dress that he wears — all protect him against the dangers of the world; they oblige him to keep aloof from its sinful and dangerous amusements. Every day the priest prays: "*Sab umbra alarum tuarum protege me, Domine.*" (Ps. xvi, 18.)

He is bound by his holy state to avoid, as much as possible, all merely worldly occupations. He is engaged continually in performing the most sacred functions. His dwelling is the house of God. His breviary, the pulpit, the confessional, the altar, all call aloud to him continually: "*O homo Dei, sectare justitiam.*" (I Tim. vi, 11.) His sacred functions are for him an overflowing fountain of grace and strength.

How often does he say while reciting his breviary: "*Deus in adiutorium meum intende.*" "*Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac.*" "*Inops et pauper sum ego; Deus adjuva me.*" "*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis peccatoribus.*" And God reassures him, "*Quoniam in me speravit, liberabo eum.*"

From the pulpit the priest announces God's holy word; he shows the enormity of sin; he preaches chastity and sobriety; he threatens the sinner with God's judgments. Must not all this have a wholesome effect upon the priest himself? "*Qui alium doces, teipsum non doces?*"

In the confessional the priest witnesses so many miracles of grace, and he thanks God for using him as the instrument of his mercy. He witnesses so often in others the terrible effects of sin. He has to advise and reprove others. Does he not feel reproved by his own words?

And at the altar,—O, what an inexhaustible fountain of grace is there for the priest! There he receives the very Fountain of grace—Jesus himself. "*Quomodo cum illo non omnia nobis donavit?*" (Rom. viii, 32.)

Can the priest who receives every day the God of strength excuse himself by saying that he sinned through weakness? Indeed, there is no excuse for him. "*Narra, si quid habes, ut justificeris,*" (Isai. xliii, 26) says God by his prophet.

The sins of the priest are more inexcusable, more enormous than the sins of any one else ; aye, they are, in some measure, even worse than the sin of the fallen angels, propter scientiam et virtutem, but especially—

II. Propter Ingratitudinem.

If the love which God has shown to every Christian is truly beyond measure—"Propter eximiam charitatem qua dilexit nos," (Eph. ii, 4), we can say that the love which God has shown to the priest surpasses all understanding. Every priest can say truly with St. Paul : "Me segregavit ex utero matris meæ, et vocavit per gratiam suam, ut revelaret Filium suum in me, ut evangelizarem illum." (Gal. i, 15.) God chose each one of us even before his birth to be a vessel of election. He gave us good pious parents, who fostered and encouraged our vocation. God watched over each one of us in the hour of trial when our vocation was in danger. He strengthened us when the world sought to lead us astray by its allurements. He has suffered so many of the friends of our youth to follow the desires of their heart, while he drew each one of us strongly and gently after him ; and we quitted the world in obedience to his loving voice.

He inspired each one of us with a high idea of the priesthood, even before we entered holy Orders. We trembled at the awful dignity which was to be placed on our shoulders. We felt that we were utterly unworthy to become the representatives of the Most High, to forgive the sins of others, to be the mediators between God and man ; we felt that we were unworthy to call down the spotless Lamb from his high throne in heaven, to sacrifice daily him who takes away the sins of the world,

to receive him ourselves and give him to others. We can say in truth: "*Fecit mihi magna, qui potens est. Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo.*"

Who shall number all the graces we have received since the day of our Ordination? What consolations in prayer! what joy at the altar, especially after offering up the holy sacrifice! what consolations in the labors of the ministry! what joy to be able to say: "Thank God, I have saved an immortal soul!" O, what an honor, what a happiness to be a priest!

How many we have known in our youth, full of talents and virtues, perhaps endowed with far greater talents and virtues than ourselves, and yet God did not choose them; they were never raised to the sublime dignity of the priesthood. During the first years of our holy ministry, we were all so thankful to God, so zealous, so fervent. How are we disposed now? Are we still as fervent, as thankful to God as then?

Has not God a right to complain of us: "*Filios enutrivit et spreverunt me.*" (Isai. i, 2.) "*Qui vescebantur voluptuose, qui nutriebantur croceis (purple), amplexati sunt stercora.*" (Threni Jerem. iv, 5.)

Is not the sinful priest inexcusable? Is he not guilty of the blackest ingratitude? Our Lord complains bitterly of this ingratitude of the priest. "*Si inimicus meus,*" he says, "*maledixisset mihi, sustinuissem utique.*" If my enemy, if the heathen, the infidel, the heretic, the lukewarm Catholic insults and dishonors me, I can bear the insult in silence; I can overlook and pardon his guilt; he has at least some excuse. "*Tu vero homo unanimes, dux meus et notus meus.*" But you, O priest of my holy Church, you, whom I have chosen in prefer-

ence to thousands, that I might be one with you, my intimate friend; you whom I have chosen to be the guardian and guide of my people; you to whom I have given so many proofs of the most tender affection. "*Qui simul mecum dulces capiebas cibos.*" You who have sat so often at my table, whom I have nourished with my own heart's blood, you who have so often tasted the sweets of my love! "*In domo Domini ambulavimus cum consensu;*" you who so often walked and spoke and labored side by side with me in God's holy temple; you who have so often preached in my name, to whom I have given the power of judging and forgiving sinners, the power of changing lifeless elements into my Flesh and Blood—ah! priest of my heart, that you should be guilty of such black ingratitude, is what grieves me and pierces me to the heart! Your ingratitude is so monstrous, so unpardonable, that I can bear it no longer.

Udo, bishop of Magdeburg, a city in Germany, was repeatedly warned by God to put an end to his scandalous life; but he did not heed the warning. One night he was brought to the church. There the eternal judge pronounced upon him the sentence of eternal death, and then the heavenly minister of justice severed with one blow the head of Udo from the body. The body of Udo was thrown into a marsh, and his blood remained for a perpetual memorial on the pavement of the church, which was always covered with a carpet. From that time it became the custom to remove it when a new bishop took possession of the church, that at the sight of such a punishment he might be mindful to lead a good life, and not be ungrateful for the graces of the Lord. (Glories of Mary).

Some years ago, a priest was thrown headlong from the fifth story and instantly killed in sin. Another one who lived in sin drank poison, thinking it was whiskey, and he fell suddenly dead.

Sin is especially heinous in the priest,

III. *Propter specialem repugnantiam ad magnitudinem personæ.*

The priest has received his sublime dignity directly from God; he belongs to God exclusively. "Separavi vos," says the Lord, "ut essetis mei." (Lev. xx, 26.) First, in baptism, and secondly, in Holy Orders, the priest entered into a solemn covenant with God. This second covenant brings with it certain grave and special obligations. These obligations are so much the more sacred, because the graces of the priest so far surpass those of the ordinary Christian. God chooses the priest from amid thousands; he confers on him a dignity far surpassing that of kings and emperors, yea, a dignity which raises him far above even the angels of heaven.

Now, God justly requires in turn that the life of the priest should be a life of virtue, a life corresponding to his high dignity, to the extraordinary graces which he has received. God himself helps him to acquire these necessary virtues. The priest is, therefore, bound to co-operate with the graces which God bestows upon him. God bestows on the priest powers the most sublime and extraordinary; consequently the priest should show his gratitude by his zeal and fervor in the performance of his duties. If the priest is faithful, he shall be rewarded a hundredfold here and hereafter for every sacrifice he makes, and if he is faithless, must not God punish him for his black ingratitude?

Can perhaps the unworthy priest excuse himself by saying: "I made no promise. I did not bind myself to strive after a high perfection"? No. He chose the priesthood of his own free will. He was not forced by any one. He declared publicly, "*Dominus pars hereditatis meæ. Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitæ meæ.*" (Ps. xxvi, 4.)

Before conferring on him the subdeaconship, the bishop said to him and his fellow-candidates: "*Filii carissimi, considerare debetis quod onus hodie ultro appetitis; hactenus liberi estis, licetque vobis pro arbitrio ad sæcularia vota transire. Quodsi hunc ordinem suscepistis, amplius non licebit a proposito resilire, sed Deo, cui servire regnare est, perpetuo famulari, et castitatem, illo adjuvante, servare oportebit, atque in ecclesiæ ministerio semper esse mancipatos. Proinde dum tempus est cogitate, et si in sancto proposito perseverare placet, in nomine Domini huc accedite.*"

We bound ourselves, therefore, at our ordination:

First, to serve God in holy chastity and in the practice of every other virtue.

Secondly, to fulfil honestly the duties of our sacred office.

Now, if every Christian that sins is guilty of infidelity in breaking his baptismal vows, how much greater is the sin of the priest who has taken upon himself such solemn obligations, who is especially consecrated to God, whose sacred duty it is to lead to God the souls of his fellow-men?

The sin of the priest has therefore a special hatefulness, a special malice, "*specialis repugnantia*," as St. Thomas says. The sublime dignity of his calling re-

quires the practice of the highest virtues ; and yet the unworthy priest does not practise even the virtues of an ordinary Christian.

The unworthy priest is judge of the people of God, and he does not judge himself. He reproveth and punishes others for their sins, and his own sins are perhaps far greater. He preaches temperance and is himself intemperate. He has made a vow of chastity, he preaches chastity to others, and, O God, how does he observe this virtue himself.

No wonder our Lord asks by the mouth of his prophet : “ Quid est quod dilectus meus in domo mea fecit scelera multa ? ” (Jerem. xi, 15.)

“ O unhappy priest,” our Lord complains ; “ what have I done to you ? What do you complain of ? Do you complain because I have loved you too much ? Do you wound me to the heart because I have chosen you in preference to so many others ? “ Dilectus meus.” And you offend me in my sanctuary, before my altar, in presence of my cross. “ In domo mea ! ” And you have dishonored me so often. Fecisti scelera multa. The unworthy priest is indeed another Judas. Judas too became a priest of his own free will ; but he only abused all the powers and graces he had received, and finally he became a traitor and a reprobate.

But what makes the sin of the priest even greater still is the scandal he thereby gives.

IV. *Propter Scandalum.*

You will find indeed many an unworthy priest who will assure you that he gives no scandal ; but he is greatly mistaken. “ Murder will out,” and the sins of the priest cannot long remain hidden. Does the unworthy priest

love solitude? Does he love study? Do you find him often in church praying before the Blessed Sacrament? Do you find him often in the confessional? Why is he so often absent when the messenger comes for a sick call? Why does he come home so late at night? Why does he visit that house so often? Why does that light burn so late in his room? Is he praying, or perhaps card-playing? Why does he sleep so long in the morning instead of being in the confessional? Why does he omit saying Mass so often on week-days? Why is he so often nervous and ill-humored? Is he not a little too free and confidential towards certain persons? Look at the church, look at the altar, look at the vestments, look at the sacred vessels—the chalice and ciborium—is everything clean, decent and orderly? Why does he not begin Mass punctually on Sundays and holydays of obligation? Why does he so often fail to keep his promises and thereby disappoint the people? See how he hurries through Mass. How does he observe the rubrics? Is he attentive and devout? Why is he so eager for money, and so indifferent when there is question of saving a soul? See how many young men and young women there are in his congregation who have grown up and have not yet made their First Communion. Why does he speak against the Pope, the bishop and religious? Why does he jest about holy things? Why does he not show more reverence in church, and when he carries the Blessed Sacrament to the sick? Why does he not show more self-respect, more priestly dignity and decorum in society, at fairs, excursions, picnics and so on? Why does he make use of words of double meaning, unbecoming hints and jests? Why does he allow young persons to read danger-

ous story papers, magazines and novels? Why does he permit them to dance round dances in spite of the prohibition of the Church? Why does he visit those dangerous places of amusement—lascivious theatres and so on? A certain person said one day, “Why can I not go to that theatre when my pastor, and Fathers so and so go there?”

These are some of the questions that the people ask; these are some of the thoughts that flit through their minds. The unworthy priest may try his best to hide his crimes; but the cloak of hypocrisy cannot hide them forever. The inner corruption of his heart betrays itself at least at times. But how terrible is the scandal when the sins of the priest are no longer a matter of doubt or uncertainty, but a sad and shameful reality. Who can sum up all the harm that is done by even one bad priest? And this evil goes on even till doom’s-day. Think of all the souls lost on account of the two bad priests, Luther and Knox.

How often must a good priest suffer for the misdeeds of his predecessors! He may be as generous and disinterested as St. Paul; still some will accuse him of avarice, of doing everything for money. His house-keeper may be a model of propriety, and he himself reserved and dignified and pure as an angel, yet wicked tongues will not be wanting to whisper unjust suspicions. He may have some wine or liquor in the house to treat his brother priests when they come to visit him; he may be a model of temperance and sobriety; and yet he will be watched with jealous eyes; he will even be accused of indulging too freely as his predecessor was wont to do.

The higher the source of the torrent is, the more rapidly does it rush into the valley, and the more wide-spread is

the destruction which it causes. O God ! who can calculate all the harm that is done, all the sins that are committed, all the souls that are ruined on account of the scandalous life of one unworthy priest ! Like a mountain torrent, the scandal rushes on, spreading death and desolation on every side. It rushes on like a poison flood, bearing death to generations yet unborn ; aye, it goes on in its work of destruction even till the day of doom ; its evil consequences go even beyond the tomb ; they live on forever in hell.

O God ! how many yet unborn will rise up on the judgment day against the bad priest and curse him ! If a petty shrub is uprooted and falls, it harms only itself ; but if a mighty cedar falls, it drags down in its deadly embrace whatever stands within its reach !

Woe to the world, when the “Salt of the earth” becomes the corrupter of innocence. Woe to the world when the “Light of the world” becomes an ignis fatuus, a wandering light that leads unwary souls into the foul, noisome marsh of sin. Woe to the world when the shepherd of the flock has become a ravenous wolf ! “*Gre^x perditus factus est populus meus,*” cries God by the mouth of his prophet ; “*pastores eorum seduxerunt eos.*” (Jerem. L. 6.) *Audite ergo sacerdotes, quia vobis judicium est ; laqueus facti estis speculationi.*” (Osee v, 1.) “You who should be the guardians of my people have become a snare and a scandal to them.”

If God did not so often cast a veil over the sins of so many unworthy priests, what horrible scandals would we witness, how many souls would be ruined ! Let us therefore ever bear in mind the words of St. Bernard : “*Nugæ in ore laicorum nugæ sunt, in ore sacerdotis blasphemix.*”

(L. ii. de. Con. c. 13.) “*Levia etiam delicta, quæ in ipsis sacerdotibus maxima essent, effugiant,*” says the Council of Trent. (Sess. ii, c. I. de Reform.)

The well-known proverb, “*Corruptio optimi pessima,*” shows us clearly enough the terrible consequences of the sins of the unworthy priest.

The unworthy priest loses the friendship of God ; he loses the beauty of his soul ; he loses the merit of all his good works. As long as he remains in sin, his arm is withered ; he can merit nothing for heaven. The unworthy priest is the slave of sin, the slave of the devil ; he heaps sin upon sin, sacrilege upon sacrilege. By his wicked life he gives scandal and ruins innocent souls.

All this is sad and terrible enough ; but the most terrible of all the consequences of sin is that the unworthy priest becomes hardened ; he is at last struck with spiritual blindness ; his conversion becomes almost an impossibility ; and finally he gives way to despair, like another Judas. “*In sacerdotio peccasti, periisti.*”

“*Impossibile est,*” says St. Paul, “*eos qui semel sunt illuminati gustaverunt etiam donum cœleste, et participes facti sunt Spiritus Sancti, et prolapsi sunt—impossibile est eos rursus renovari ad pœnitentiam. Terra enim sæpe venientem super se bibens imbrem, proferens autem spinas ac tribulos reprobata est et maledicto proxima, cujus consummatio in combustionem.* (Heb. vi, 4, etc.)

CHAPTER VI.

SACRILEGIOUS CELEBRATION OF MASS.

The mere mention of this crime makes faith shudder on account of its enormity and the dreadful circumstances which accompany it.

A priest who dares to say Mass in the state of mortal sin, knowingly and wilfully, commits four sacrileges, different in kind, says St. Alphonsus.

Indigne conficit.—He consecrates the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, although he is at enmity with God. This is the first sacrilege.

Indigne sumit.—He receives unworthily a sacrament of the living, and even the holiest of all, because his soul is stained with mortal sin. This is the second sacrilege.

Indigne ministrat.—He administers it in the state of mortal sin. This is the third sacrilege.

Ministrat indigno.—He administers it to an unworthy receiver, although by his office he is bound to refuse it. (Theol. Mor. l. vi, n. 35.) He thus violates four different obligations, imposed upon him by the virtue of religion. By every one of these sacrileges the sacrilegious celebrant does a kind of violence to Jesus Christ. He abuses in a most unworthy manner both the *patience* of the adorable Lamb and the *power* which he has received over the divine Person of Christ.

“Nemo deterius peccat,” says St. Thomas, “quam sacerdos qui indigne sacrificat. (In Epist. ad Cor. c. xi.)

Qui sacra illius sacramenti verba ore immundo pro-

fert, in faciem Salvatoris sputit," says Peter Comestor (38) "et cum in os immundum sanctissimam carnem ponit, eum quasi in lutum projicit."

A man to whom the Lord has confided himself, whom he has commissioned to be the guardian of his Body, and make him to be honored in this mystery of love, should be ready to sacrifice his life a thousand times, if possible, in order to prevent the outrage of but one sacrilegious Mass.

It is not the name, the image, or the law of Jesus Christ; it is his own divine Person who is outraged; it is that divine Body which has suffered so much for us, which should be respected at least in its glorious state.

In what place, at what time, and in what action is this crime perpetrated? It is committed in the sanctuary, on the altar, in the most holy place on earth, in the place where the charity of Jesus Christ shows itself more tenderly and more generously in our behalf—in that moment in which he immolates himself for us, in which he prays for us to his heavenly Father in order that he may pour out upon us his gifts and benefits,—in that act of religion which gives true honor to God and obtains true happiness for the people! What a wicked and horrible thing to behold a priest engaged in an act of such an enormous profanation—in a sacrilegious sacrifice! to behold supreme bounty associated with supreme perversity; to behold the supreme honor of God united to the greatest possible excess of his dishonor! to behold—permit me to say it—the devil himself, as it were, consecrating the Body of Christ! *Ex vobis unus diabolus est.* (John vi, 71.)

Ah! how easy it is to sympathize with the afflicted

heart of Jesus, if we consider in detail this spectacle of horror for heaven, of terror for earth, and of triumph for hell! "The abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." (Matt. xxiv, 15.)

Behold the unworthy celebrant commencing Mass: "Introibo," he says, "ad altare Dei." No, no, answer the angels, do not approach the altar of God at which the holiest of priests tremble. Sancta sanctis.

"Ad Deum, qui lætificat juventutem meam." What! should you not rather shed bloody tears, and you seem to promise to yourself holy joy! Have you then become insensible to remorses of conscience?

"Judica me, Deus." At these words hell exults for joy. Sacred altar, hast thou heard it?

"Quare tristis es, anima mea, et quare conturbas me?" What! He is astonished at the sadness and troubled state of his soul! How should he enjoy the tranquillity of a good conscience at a moment in which he is about to commit the most heinous and the most abominable of all actions!

Everything menaces him, everything accuses him, everything condemns him whilst he is going through the prayers and ceremonies of the holy sacrifice. Does it behove him to sing the celestial canticles, "Gloria in excelsis Deo;" "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus"? or to say so often to the people: "Dominus vobiscum"?

How can he dare speak of his innocence? Ego autem in innocentia mea ingressus sum. How can he dare enter in communication with what is most holy in heaven? Communicantes. . . . and especially to pronounce the words of consecration?

Can he kiss the altar without hearing at the same time

a voice repeating to him the words addressed to the first Judas : *Osculo filium hominis tradis?* How can he dare touch with his polluted hands the sacred Host without thinking of that complaint of our Lord : *Ecce manus tradentis me mecum est in mensâ ?* . . .

Is it possible for a priest to perform the duties of the sanctuary without becoming holier every day ? Alas ! how many a priest has found the secret of uniting vile passions with the most sublime profession ! “ *Honor sublimis, vita deformis ; deifica professio, et illicita actio.*” (St. Ambrose de dign. sacerdot.)

How terrible to see the mark of the beast on the brow that has been adorned with the sacred sign of the priesthood. O what a fearful sacrilege !

St. Teresa saw a priest saying Mass while in mortal sin. Two hideous devils sat on his shoulders with their horns twisted around his neck. As this wretched priest gave holy Communion to St. Teresa, our Lord spoke to her from the sacred host : “ See how great is the love I bear thee ! For thy sake I deliver myself up into the hands of my most bitter enemies ! ”

Another saint, while attending the Mass of an unworthy priest, saw at the altar after the consecration, a ravenous wolf holding an innocent lamb in its claws. At communion she saw how this blood-thirsty wolf tore the poor lamb to pieces and devoured it with his horrid jaws.

An apostate priest one day said : “ I committed sacrilege. I said Mass in mortal sin. The priest who does that is fit for every crime.”

We have spoken of but one sacrilegious celebration. But how terrible is the crime of him who commits it habitually ! O my God ! preserve thy Church from so

great a calamity. Inspire all thy ministers with that lively faith, with that holy fear which should seize upon them when entering the sanctuary. Pavete ad sanctuarium meum, Ego Dominus. (Lev. xxvi, 2.) As to myself, O my Lord, let me become blind, dumb and deaf, let me die rather than permit me to profane thy holy mysteries. Strike me always and everywhere in thy merciful justice rather than to permit me to fall into this fathomless abyss.

The priest who by his fidelity in his religious exercises, constantly preserves the spirit of faith, and especially a great delicateness of conscience in matters of charity, disinterestedness and chastity, has but very little to fear in regard to the sacrilegious celebration of Mass. The vices contrary to charity, disinterestedness and chastity, are called by St. Bernard the chariot of Pharaoh, or of the devil, because the spirit of darkness generally makes use of them to entice souls and their directors to follow illusive roads which lead to destruction.

The priest who wishes to celebrate Mass every day in a worthy manner must watch carefully over his heart, in order to keep far from it every kind of aversion, of resentment and hatred. He celebrates the great mystery of the infinite charity of Jesus Christ. He, therefore, generously forgives all the wrongs that he has suffered from his fellow-creatures. He knows that, by imitating the patience, meekness and inexhaustible bounty of our Saviour for his very enemies, he establishes true peace and happiness in his heart.

He is also very careful to exclude from his functions the motive of self-interest. What a shame, indeed, to sell the Blood of Jesus Christ for a piece of silver!

The nearest and most frightful danger for a priest of falling from abyss into abyss, even into that of the sacrilegious celebration of Mass, is undoubtedly found in the neglect of watchfulness over the purity of morals. It is so very easy to wound sacerdotal chastity, and so very difficult to wound it but slightly. How far will not he go who dares to put his foot on so dangerous a ground? Ere long there will be hardly any difference between the angel of the Lord and the brute—the man who by his dignity, by his titles, by his functions, was raised to the highest rank of honor, will soon lose his good sense, as it were, retaining only some gross animal instincts. *Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit: comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis.* (Ps. 48, 13.)

Besides, there is no disease more difficult to be cured. The confession of such faults is so very humiliating. Will it ever be quite sincere? Sorrow for such sins should be very bitter; the will to avoid every wilful occasion of such sins, should be very firm. Is not the one or the other often very defective?

The number of those who had the misfortune to fall into this sin and got entirely rid of it, is indeed very small. *Peccatum maximæ adhærentiæ.* (St. Thomas.) The lips pronounce the formula of eternal detestation, but the heart generally retains this leprosy.

1. Never turn a deaf ear to the reproaches of conscience. If you have reason to believe that you have committed a grievous fault, no matter of what nature it may be, do not delay to confess it. Be not ashamed to confess your guilt. You are no more guilty after an humble and sincere confession. By it you wash yourself in the Blood of the Lamb and recover the right to

eat again the Bread of the living and to enter into the celestial city. *Beati, qui laverunt stolas suas in sanguine Agni, ut sit potestas eorum in ligno vitæ, et per portas intrent in civitatem.* (Apoc. xxii, 14.)

2. Do not deceive yourself by the pretext that it is necessary for you to say Mass, or that it is not possible for you to go to confession. Is this necessity, is this impossibility always as real as it is believed to be? But should the one or the other be really such, then the infinite mercy of God offers to the unhappy priest a supreme resource in a true act of perfect contrition.

3. Should any one have been so unfortunate as to precipitate himself into that deep abyss of sacrilegious celebration, he must not, on this account, give up to despair and lose confidence in the infinite mercy of the Lord, who makes his greatest glory consist in forgiving the most enormous crimes. *Deus, cui proprium est miserere semper et parcere; qui omnipotentiam tuam parcendo maxime et miserando manifestas.* (Dom. x, p. Pentec.) Judas filled the measure of his iniquities by his sin of despair, whilst David, on the contrary, obtained pardon by entering upon the beautiful sentiment: *Propter nomen tuum, Domine, propitiaberis peccato meo; multum est enim.* (Ps. xxiv, 11.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPIRIT OF AVARICE—ITS EVIL EFFECTS.

The spirit of avarice is opposed to the dignity as well as to the mission of the Catholic priest.

I. Neither a man, nor a Christian, much less a priest, can be attached to material and perishable goods without forgetting and degrading himself. A pagan, in speaking of all that flatters the senses, said: "*Major sum, et ad majora natus sum.*" At the sight of all terrestrial things, a Christian ought to say: "*Quam sordet tellus, dum cœlum intueor!*" What then must a priest think of all earthly goods, if he has but the least idea of his sublime vocation and dignity on earth?

A man elevated above the monarchs of this world as much as the soul is superior to the body, a man belonging to heaven by the sublimity of his functions, a man walking, as it were, as the equal of the angels and having even greater powers, a man called to employments quite divine—to reconcile the Creator with the creature, to combat hell, destroy sin, and establish the kingdom of virtue, grace and peace—what! a man of this character and vocation respecting himself so little as to be attached to vain riches which God leaves to his enemies and upon which he has pronounced eternal woe! A man of this character applying himself most seriously to the gain of the filthy lucre, what a shame, disgrace and profanation of the sacerdotal dignity! "*Ignominia sacerdotis est propriis studere divitiis.*" (St. Hieronimus ad Nep.)

Man of God, exclaims St. Paul, how can you disgrace and degrade yourself to such a degree ! Have you then forgotten what you must fly and what you must seek ? “*Tu autem, O homo Dei, hæc fuge.*” (1 Tim. vi, 11.) If you were not the minister of a Saviour who, here below, had not where to rest his head and who made detachment from earthly goods the foundation of all Christian and sacerdotal sanctity, your love of money, your desire of amassing it, would be more excusable. But as it is the noble duty of the priest worthily to represent Jesus Christ, he must fly a contrast so revolting between himself and the God of the manger, of Nazareth and of Calvary. “*Sectare vero justitiam . . . charitatem.* Love justice and holiness of life ; love God and make him to be loved. Prepare yourself to possess him eternally ; give him to your brethren by saving them. Behold an ambition worthy of you ; but leave to the mercenary the filthy lucre, the recompense of his servile labors.

II. The spirit of avarice is opposed to the mission of the priest.

To glorify God, to render and have rendered, the honor which is due to him, and save souls, is the object of the evangelical priesthood. How can this object be realized by a priest whose heart is buried in the love of money ?

Far from glorifying God he outrages him. In the Old Testament, the priest did not receive a portion of the land which God gave to the children of Israel. That exclusion was for them a signal privilege. They possessed a good which satisfied all desires and all the riches of this world could not take its place. “I myself,” said the Lord to them, “will be the portion of your in-

heritance. Ego ero pars et hereditas tua in medio filiorum Israel." (Num. xviii, 20.) If the priesthood of the Old Law was endowed with magnificence, what do you say of yours, O priest of the New Testament? God belongs to you in a manner incomparably more perfect than he did to the priests, the sons of Aaron. That excellent portion you received when receiving the clerical tonsure. "Dominus pars hereditatis meæ." You promised to be satisfied and contented with it; and who, O my God, would refuse to be satisfied and contented with Thee? "Quid illius potest concupiscentiam satiari, cui non potest ipse Deus in possessione sufficere?" (St. Petr. Dam.) It is the avaricious priest that offers Thee, O Lord, this insult. Thou who fillest and inebriatest all the elect for all eternity, Thou art not sufficient to him! In the distribution of Thy goods, Thou hast given the earth to the children of men: "Terram dedit filiis hominum." To Thy ministers Thou hast given Thyself: "Ego ero pars et hereditas tua." And now behold one who does not consider Thee, O Lord, a good great enough for him; he prefers the goods of the world. Thou, O Lord, belongest to him, and he thinks something is wanting, and he seeks in the dust what he fails to find in Thee! O Supreme Good! O source and plenitude of all good! Is it thus Thou art outraged by one who has received from Thee so much honor! Can there be a viler affront?

Another object of the priesthood is to establish, propagate and sustain religion. We are the ministers of the divine worship. But has the avaricious priest himself a religion? May we not ask what worship he renders to God? Is it the worship of *faith*? He seems not to believe in divine Providence, in the power and goodness of

God, in the faithfulness to his promises. Passionate love of riches, says St. Paul, has misled many in matters of faith. “*Quam quidam appetentes, erraverunt a fide.*” (I. Tim. vi, 10.) *Vides, quia qui pecuniam appetit, fidem perdit.*” (St. Ambros. Serm. 59. de in avarit.)

Does the avaricious priest worship God by *hope*? The interested priest counts on his money much more than on God. “*Ecce homo, qui non posuit Deum adiutorem suum, sed speravit in multitudine divitiarum suarum.*” (Ps. li, 8.)

Does the avaricious priest worship God by *charity*? Where the heart is, there also is the treasure. “*Putant plus valere nummum, quam Deum.*” (St. Aug. in Ps. lii.) “*Frui volunt nummo, uti autem Deo.*” (Id. Civit Dei. L. ii.)

Religion, the care of which is confided to us, can have no enemy more formidable than idolatry. Superstition disfigures it, licentiousness mocks it. . . , but idolatry undermines and destroys it entirely.

Now, St. Paul tells us in express terms, in two of his epistles, that the inordinate attachment to the goods of this world contains this great iniquity, which renders to the creature the honor and worship that is due to God alone. A prophet said the same: “*Dives effectus sum: inveni mihi idolum.* (Os. 12, 8.) But what is most hideous and most monstrous, is, that this idolatry has for temples, the very temples of the true God, and for ministers, the Lord’s own ministers: *Væ, vœ, in domo Dei horrendum videmus. Quidni idololatrias ministrantes?* Mentior, si non idolorum servitus avaritia est; quod enim quisque præ ceteris colit, id sibi Deum constituisse probatur. (S. Bern. De vit. cler. c. 5.)

Finally, what can be more opposed to the zeal of salvation of souls than the spirit of interest? What was said to the apostles, is said to us also: *Ite ad oves, quæ perierunt. . . . Infirmos curate, mortuos suscite, leprosos mundate, dæmones ejicite* (Matt. x.); for these external miracles which were operated by the first priests of Jesus Christ were the symbol of the miracles of grace which we, like them, are to operate. But in order to render us fit instruments of these sublime things, God who sends us, gives us the recommendation: "*Gratis accepistis, gratis date. Nolite possidere aurum. . . . neque pecuniam in zonis vestris.*" (Ibid.) We know very well, that those priests who, at all times, have succeeded best in this noble mission, were men who either possessed nothing or whose hearts were not attached to any thing of this world. They are the very ones who know how to sympathize with those who are in troubles, trials, and sufferings. "*Proni compati, subvenire prompti.*" (St. Bern.)

But speak not of sympathy to the interested priest. He thinks only of himself; he sees only himself; or rather, he thinks and sees only his money. He cares not for the salvation of his flock. Their salvation is of no concern to him. "*Mercenarius est; non pertinet ad eum de ovibus.*" (John x, 13.) Were his whole life to pass away without gaining a single soul; were those whose salvation is entrusted to him, miserably to perish, their eternal ruin would not touch his heart. But were one of his parishioners to refuse to pay him but a trifling debt, or call into question some of his rights, or make some abatement from his perquisites, then he would feel extraordinarily grieved; he would complain without ceasing.

“Plus evigilant subditorum evacuandis marsupiis, quam vitiis extirpandis.” (St. Bern. in Syn. Rem.) Even granted that he exercises his functions with some appearance of devotion, what can he expect from a ministry tarnished in the opinion of the public. To be looked upon by the public as an avaricious man is a great stain upon every virtue with which he may seem to be adorned. They believe not in his zeal when they perceive that he is governed by other interests than the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Effects of the Spirit of Avarice.

Passionate love of money is a passion that blinds and hardens the soul, and leads it at last to final impenitence and reprobation.

1. Every passion blinds the soul ; but the passion of avarice does so far more fearfully. Who could know better than Judas the vanity of riches and the merits of voluntary poverty. He had heard the divine teachings of Jesus Christ, concerning the detachment from terrestrial goods. “Beati pauperes spiritu.” He had heard the woes pronounced upon the rich. “Væ vobis divitibus.” He had heard the recommendations which Jesus Christ gave to all his apostles when he sent them to announce the Gospel to all nations. “Et præcepit eis, ne quid tollerent in via . . . non peram, non panem, neque in zona æs.” (Mark vi, 8.) Like the other apostles he knew from experience the great blessings attached to the preaching of the Gospel, especially when preached to the poor. “Et reversi sunt cum gaudio, dicentes : etiam dæmonia subjiciuntur nobis in nomine tuo.” (Luke x, 17.) At the very moment in which his passion burst forth in loud murmurs against Magdalen, (Ut quid per-

ditio hæc), he hears his Master praise the pious prodigality of this woman, and foretell that this action would render him honor before the whole world. “Amen dico vobis, ubicunque prædicatum fuerit hoc evangelium in toto mundo, dicetur et quod hæc fecit in memoriam ejus.” (Ibid. i, 13.) But the example alone of our Saviour should have convinced Judas more than anything else. He believed in his Divinity. He had seen so many proofs of it. He could not help being persuaded that whatever is despised by God should be held in the greatest contempt, and that, whatever is esteemed by God, should be held in the highest esteem. Now, he saw with his own eyes the Creator of the Universe possessing nothing and not wishing to possess anything. Amidst all these lights the wretched apostle sees not.

Passionate love of money blinded him so far even as to forget the interest of his cupidity itself. He knew how intensely the Pharisees hated Jesus Christ. He therefore might have profited by their hatred. He might have required a high price for betraying Jesus Christ. They, no doubt, would have paid it, for they would never have believed that they could buy too dear their vengeance on Jesus Christ. But, no; he went and asked them: “Quid vultis mihi dare?” He is satisfied with thirty pieces of silver—he who a little before regretted so much having lost more than three hundred. “Poterat unguentum istud venundari plus quam trecentis denariis.” (Mark xv, 5.) O delirium! O monstrous blindness! exclaims St. John Chrysostom. But is it less monstrous in the successors to the apostles? Do not the priests preach the Gospel which condemns so severely inordinate love of the goods of this world and forbids us expressly to be

solicitous for the morrow—a solicitude quite peculiar to the heathen. “*Hæc enim omnia gentes inquirunt?*” (Matt. vi, 32.) Have not priests the same example of our Lord? Have they not the terrible lesson which Judas has given them by his blindness and misfortune? Alas! what great ravages have not been caused in the sanctuary by the passionate love of money ever since the establishment of the Church! Is this passion banished from it at the present day Ah! there are so many kinds of avarice! Hence Jesus Christ did not say: “*Cavete ab avaritia;*” he said: “*Videte et cavete ab omni avaritia.*” (Luke xii, 15.) This vice hides itself under so many specious pretexts. Many say: “It is good to save something for a rainy day, for certain good purposes. What could we do without money?” And meanwhile the poor must suffer, the good complain and are scandalized, and life passes away without good works.

St. Bernard, commenting on the words of St. Paul: *Hebentes alimenta et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus*, (I Tim. vi, 8), asks, where are those ecclesiastics who content themselves with the necessities of life and despise what is superfluous? “This rule,” says he, “established by the apostles, we read in books, but who observes it? It is, however, written of the just man that the law of God is in his heart. (Præf. vit. S. Malach.) Every one is of the opinion of St. Paul, that from the pastoral ministry should be excluded any one who seeks by it the filthy lucre: “*Non turpis lucri cupidum.*” The difficulty is to know to whom this bad note is to be applied. St. Jerome answers: To him who thinks too much of the things of this world and who troubles himself beyond measure about future things which must be left to the care of Providence:

“*Turpis lucri appetitio est, plus quam necesse est de præsentibus cogitare.*” St. Paul himself explains his meaning. “*Sint mores sine avaritia, contenti præsentibus; ipse enim dixit: Non te deseram neque derelinquam.*” (Heb. xiii, 5.) Let us distrust a passion which perverted an apostle, in the school and under the eyes of Jesus Christ, and which fills souls with such great darkness.

II. Inordinate love of money hardens the priest and renders him capable of committing the blackest crimes. No sooner had Judas suffered himself to be influenced by the spirit of interest than he became quite insensible to everything. He had no longer a heart except for money. All the efforts of our Saviour to make him enter into himself, were useless. When he spoke of his approaching death and of one of his disciples being about to betray him, all the apostles were filled with sadness except Judas; he alone was without feeling. When Jesus humbled himself so far as to wash the feet of his apostles, Peter could not bear the idea of such humility: “*Tu mihi lavas pedes!*” (John xiii, 6.) But Judas presented his foot without the least objection. In the garden of Olives he witnessed miracles. Men in arms fell to the ground at the mere word of the Lord. The ear of Malchus cut off by St. Peter, was perfectly restored to its place all on a sudden. He saw the ineffable meekness of his divine Master, who stooped to receive his perfidious kiss, and called him his friend! But nothing made an impression upon him: warnings, reproaches, menaces, tears, caresses, tender and kind insinuations, all means possible are used by Jesus Christ to gain him; but in vain. His materialized soul resisted all. His avarice rendered him obdurate and induced him to commit the blackest, the most sac-

rilegious of all crimes. “*Quid vultis mihi dare, et ego vobis eum tradam?*” (Matt. xxvi, 15.) The Lord of heaven and earth became the victim of the spirit of interest! The Creator of the Universe was offered for sale! for a real contract was made. Jesus was, as it were, the merchandise in question. Thirty pieces of silver were the price. Judas was the merchant. The Jewish priests were the purchasers, and the Lord was sold! The unworthy communion and despair filled the measure of these horrors!

Tremble, O priest, if you discover in your heart but a little germ of this execrable passion. If it is not extirpated from your heart, what good can be expected from you? There is no crime which it may not induce you to commit. *Passio omnium pessima. Omnium viti-
orum receptaculum. Omnis iniquitatis metropolis. Im-
pietas lumen omne divinum exterminans.* . . . It is thus that it has been described by the interpreters of holy Scripture, according to the words of St. Paul: *Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas.* (I. Tim. vi, 10.) It will extinguish in you every good sentiment. Neither charity, nor religion, nor decorum itself, and the respect due to your state of life, will be able to check you. All will be sacrificed to avarice—the functions of the ministry, even the deposit of faith: *Docentes quæ non oportet, turpis lucri gratia.* (Tit. i, 11.) May God grant that you may not go so far as to ascend the altar to give up to the devil the same body and the same divine blood which Judas delivered up to the Jews, after having profaned it in the cenacle!

Avaro nihil scelestius. . . . Nihil est iniquius quam amare pecuniam; hic enim et animam suam venalem

habet. (Ecc. x, 9—10.) Pope Innocent III. says of the avaricious man : Offendit Deum, offendit proximum, offendit seipsum. Nam Deo retinet debita, proximo denegat necessaria, sibi subtrahit opportuna ; Deo ingratus, proximo impius, sibi crudelis. (De vilitat. cond. hum. l. 1.)

III. *Inordinate love of money leads to final impenitence.*

It cannot be denied that there is a particular kind of malediction attached to the shameful love of money. Those who wish to become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which draw men into destruction and perdition." (I. Tim. vi, 9.)

St. Bernard says, that there will be no share in heaven for an ecclesiastic who seeks his share in earthly things. Ah ! how difficult it is for an avaricious priest to restore sincerely to his God the heart he has given to his money ! Fit justo Dei judicio, ut qui cupiditati resistere nolumus ingressuræ, jam resistere nequeamus ingressæ. (S. Prosper. L. 2. de vit. act. Sacerd. c. 15.) Old age, which weakens other passions, increases and strengthens this one : Cum cetera vitia, senescente homine, senescant, sola avaritia juvenescit. Let us take a lesson from the example of Judas. The rocks of Mount Calvary were rent, his heart remained obdurate. This bad priest and apostle gave some signs of returning to better sentiments ; he even gave such ones as ordinarily assure us most of the conversion of sinners. He repented : " Pœnitentiâ ductus." He confessed his crime : " Peccavi, tradens sanguinem justum." He repaired it, it seems, as much as was possible for him : " Retulit triginta argenteos principibus sacerdotum. (Matt. xxvii, 3, 4.) And yet, in spite of all this, he died impenitent.

What a pleasure it is to behold a good priest who has grown gray in the service of God ! His brow may be wrinkled with years, but his heart is yet young. His pure soul gleams still with all the innocent cheerfulness of youth. “*Renovabitur ut aquila juvenus ejus.*” (Ps. cii.) What a joy when he sees around him a virtuous generation whom he has baptized, instructed, and led on in the pathway to heaven !

What a joy and consolation for the good old pastor when some hoary-headed penitent kisses his hand with tears of joy and gratitude, when the little children rush to him with bright eyes and laughing faces and crave his blessing.

What joy and consolation for the good old priest when after many years, some one thanks and blesses him for his instructions, his good advice, his kind sympathy. It is perhaps some one he received into the Church years ago ; some one he prepared for the First Communion ; some one he encouraged and helped to make a good confession ; some one he saved from despair, or from a life of sin and shame ; some one who was induced by his preaching to give up a life of sin, or some chosen soul whose innocence he protected, or whom he induced to leave the world and consecrate her pure heart to God.

We read in the life of Father Demetrius Gallitzin that the Emperor of Russia would not pardon the son of Prince Alexander Gallitzin for becoming a Catholic priest. In 1808 the noble missionary received from a friend in Europe a letter, saying : “The question of your rights and those of the princess, your sister, as to your father’s property in Russia has been examined by the Senate of St. Petersburg, and it has been decided that by

reason of your Catholic faith, and your ecclesiastical profession, you cannot be admitted to a share of your late father's property. Your sister is consequently sole heiress of the property, and is soon to be put in possession of it. The Council of State has confirmed the decision of the Senate, and the emperor, by his sanction, has given it the force of law." The Princess Anne Gallitzin had promised her brother to restore him his share, to which, as she acknowledged, she had no lawful right. She sent, on various occasions, large sums to the missionary, who employed them in meeting his engagements and in relieving the poor. However, in the whole, it amounted to but a small part of the revenues to which he was entitled. But after the princess was married to a Prince of Salm, she spoke no more about restitution. The missionary thus lost all his patrimony. He offered the sacrifice to God with the most perfect resignation. If he regretted the wealth, it was only for the poor and for the Church, not for himself. His panegyrist has well said, "If he had had a heart of gold he would have given it to the unfortunate." The Rev. Demetrius Gallitzin was therefore not only the zealous pastor of his flock, he was also its father and benefactor and never consented to leave it. Imposing on himself a thousand austerities, lodged in an humble cabin, dressed in coarse clothes, incessantly travelling from one place to another to instruct the people and administer to them the consolations of religion.

How unhappy, on the contrary, is that priest who, the older he grows, the more selfish, peevish and material he becomes!

As he grows older
His heart grows colder.
The more his body stoops
The more his virtue droops.
The more his blood grows cold
The fonder of his gold.
The nearer he draws to the grave
The less he tries his soul to save.
And e'en when death knocks at his door,
His soul but clings to earth the more.

O cursed lust of gold ! when for thy sake
The fool throws up his interest in both worlds.
First starved in this, then damned in that to come.

“ *Inclina, Domine, cor meum in testimonia tua, et non
in avaritiam.*”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PASSIONS—THE SOURCE OF OUR SINS.

We shall never obtain that eminent degree of purity which is the glory of the priest and leads to his happiness, if our hatred of sin does not include its causes.

I. We must fear every passion because every passion leads to sin. Every passion deceives us, flatters us, and tyrannizes over us, and makes us fall, and retains us in the melancholy state of sin.

1. The clouds hide from us the beauty of the sun. Disorderly inclinations obscure the light of faith, and even that of reason.

Why did not the voice of the blood of innocent Abel preach to Cain of his guilt? What were the gray locks and the dignity of the magistracy to the infamous old men who attacked the virtue of Susannah? Why did not the sweet and tender words which our dear Saviour spoke to Judas, make any salutary impression upon the faithless apostle? Why is it that the dignity with which the priest is clothed, the veneration in which he is held, the pure and holy morals which he preaches, the functions of his holy ministry, the habit that he wears, do not deeply impress every priest? Ah! once a passion is allowed to enter the soul, it envelops it with such darkness that it sees not what to others is as visible as the sun. "*Super cecidit ignis et non viderunt solem.*" (Ps. lvii, 9.) Every passion rises from disorderly love of self, or from what flatters the love of self. It always pretends that there is

no evil. "*Quodcunque volumus sanctum est.*" (St. Aug.) It finds at least some excuse of the passion itself, of its power and violence. It sees, however, more than it likes to see, and its iniquity consists in being false to the light and truth, for seldom it happens that blindness is absolute. There remains in the soul a certain eye, as it were, always half open, and which in spite of the passion, sees the law and knows the crime contrary to the law and the punishment attached to the violation of the law.

2. The passions flatter us ; and by the pleasures they promise, they seduce the heart and mislead the will. It is in vain that reason protests, conscience cries, God threatens—nothing is listened to. The imagination being inflamed, it exaggerates the pleasure, evil consequences are lost sight of, and the soul falls into the abyss.

3. Every passion is a tyrant. By yielding to it ever so little we increase its power, render it more bold, exacting and imperious. We take from ourselves whatever strength we give it. At first we yield to its importunate solicitations ; soon after we cannot resist, and our weak complacency becomes habitual. Habit, in the opinion of an eminent saint of great experience, is like iron fetters which chain the will. "*Ligatus eram ferrea mea voluntate.*" (St. August.)

O the lamentable state of a priest of the Lord, who, before teaching his brethren the art of stifling their passions, renders himself the vile slave of his own ! He satisfies them ; alas ! does he satisfy his conscience ? And what does he gain in indulging his passion if his soul is tormented, his mind agitated, and his heart lacerated ? "*Tribulatio et angustia in omnem animam hominis operantis malum,*" (Rom. ii, 9) for every man without exception ; but if that man is a priest, will not the shame

be yet more overwhelming, the remorse more tormenting, and the tribulation and anguish more crucifying? Let us then fear every passion, knowing that every one leads to evil.

II. Of all the passions, the one to be feared most is the one which disguises itself, because it leads to the deepest of abysses.

Passions are disguised either to conceal crime, or to increase it, or to encourage the culprit in his sins.

1. Crime when unveiled is always odious even to him who commits it, because conscience always represents it as opposed to order, to reason, and the law of justice written in the heart of every man. If it is odious even to the guilty ones, how does it try to appear to the witnesses? In order to escape the hatred and shame due to it, every passion tries to remain hidden from the view of the public. Who would believe that Judas, the thief, wished to pass for an advocate of the poor? How to recognize avarice under the mantle of charity? It is his avarice, however, that makes him say: "Why this loss and extravagance? Why not sell the costly perfume and give the price to the poor?" This way of veiling his passion is one sin more. But as a passion in disguise is doubly criminal in the sight of the Lord, will not he punish it doubly both as passion and hypocrisy?

2. *Passions in disguise multiply sin.*

It seldom happens that a passion which is detected is not restricted or at least more or less checked in its irregular course. But a passion which succeeds in concealing itself, is carried to great excess. A well-ventilated mine is not dangerous; but everything is to be feared when the enemy conceals his work from the eyes of

a conscientious inspector. It was by masking their envy and hatred of Jesus under a specious kind of zeal for the public good and for religion that the Pharisees, by a succession of multiplied iniquities, arrived at the most enormous one of deicide. Ah ! how many secret abominations does not a shameful passion perpetrate when it is introduced into the sanctuary under cover of gravity, devotion, and perhaps even piety itself ! If an unworthy priest had not some virtue, at least apparent, he could not impose on anybody ; he would be a shame to himself ; he might be reclaimed by his remorse of conscience. But when he sins against faith under the veil of a certain devotion, of a certain zeal—what will prevent him from multiplying his sins, and from sleeping in the most fatal security ?

3. *Passions in disguise confirm the sinner in his sin.*

How many artifices and pretexts do not certain sinners employ to hide from the eyes of men the grossness and disorder of certain passions ! Often even, when these intriguing hypocrites cannot help preventing their disorders from becoming known, they try to baffle suspicions by impudence. Witness Judas, the traitor. The sad declaration made by Jesus to his apostles that one of them would betray him was like a clap of thunder which made every one fear for himself. Every one said to himself : “ It is God who speaks. He knows what is coming to pass.” Every one fears and questions himself. But the perfidious apostle who knew well the truth, who more than all the others, had cause to be alarmed, is the only one who appeared to have no fear, and adding insult to effrontery, he coldly asks, in his turn, “ Numquid ego sum, Rabbi ?”

Such is the nature of the passions in general, though there is one more impudent than the others, and that one is impurity. Falsehood, knavery, sacrilege have their masks; were they openly convicted, they would say: *Numquid ego sum?* But that hideous passion of impurity seeks to hide itself sometimes under an air of effrontery which alone is sufficient to make it known.

There is another vice, the vice of drunkenness, which is one of the principal causes of all kinds of temporal, mental and spiritual misery.

To conceive a wholesome horror of the vice of drunkenness and to make an inviolable resolution never to become guilty of this vice, we have but to consider what a drunkard is.

What is a drunkard? A Christian is one who follows and practices the virtues of Christ. An angel is a pure creature that contemplates and enjoys God. A man is a creature that thinks and reasons. A brute is a creature that follows its appetite, but never goes to excesses beyond the bounds of order. What is a drunkard? I have gone through the whole of creation that lives, and I find nothing in it like the drunkard. He enjoys no happiness like the angels; he is not preparing himself for happiness like the Christian; he does not think or reason like a man; he keeps not his appetite within the bounds of nature, like the brute. What, then, is the drunkard? The drunkard is nothing but the drunkard. There is no other thing in nature to which he can be likened.

This is not a subject on which we can be allowed to soften down the truth in our words until it becomes falsehood. The drunkard is a self-made wretch, who has

depraved, and has gratified the depraved craving of the throat of his body until he has sunk his soul so far that it is lost in his flesh, and has sunk his very flesh lower down beyond comparison than that of the animals which serve him. He is a self-degraded creature, whose degradation is made manifest to every one but himself; a self-made miserable being, who, whilst he is insensible to his own misery, afflicts every one around him or belonging to him with misery. He differs from the madman only in this: that the madman has not caused his own calamity, whilst this man has; that the madman is innocent, whilst this man is guilty. The madman is an object for pity and compassion, and all the cares of humanity; whilst the drunkard is an object of ridicule, scorn, contempt; a butt for the world to play its follies at; a stock for the world's laughter; a ball for its game of mockery; a tool for the knave's cheatery and the harlot's wilery; an instrument in the hands of hell's malignity. The madman is placed in security: he can be guarded against injuring himself or others. The drunkard is let loose upon mankind, like some foul, ill-boding and noxious animal, to pester, torment, and disgust everything that reasons or feels: whilst the curse of God hangs over his place and the gates of heaven are closed against him. "Be not deceived," says the Apostle; "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor drunkards shall possess the kingdom of heaven." It is not I, it is St. Paul, who classes the drunkard in this company, and shuts the gates of heaven against him. An outcast: the woes of the Wise Man fall thick and fast upon him. "Who hath woe?" asks Solomon, "whose father hath woe? who hath contentions? who falls into pits? who hath wounds without cause? who

hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink up their cups." "Woe to you," says Isaias, "woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink until the evening to be inflamed. Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and are stout men at drunkenness. Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkenness of Ephraim; the drunkenness of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot." Are not these woes written on the face of the drunkard? Are they not heard in all his acts? Knows he what he says, or what he says not? Has not prudence left the guard of his tongue? Is there any gate to his mouth or any guard to bar his lips? Are not the secrets of the past, the follies of the present, the fetid fumes of the liquor, and the foul thoughts from the tempter mingled together and poured out upon all around him? The very animal powers sink under drunkenness. It lessens the sense as well as the soul, and deadens the feelings as well as the mind; weakens, stupefies, sickens, shatters the frame of the animal man, as well as the frame of the rational man; deprives him of God, deprives him of heaven, deprives him of honor, cuts him off from human respect, casts him away from the friendship of men, destroys his fortune, deprives him of himself, kills all his good here, and all his hope hereafter, and bloats his body with premature disease to fatten the worms and enrich the rankness of the graveyard.

A holy Father has described this condition as truly as briefly: "Drunkenness," he says, "is a willing fury, a traitor of thoughts, a ridiculous calamity, a voluntary demon, a state worse than madness." Would you know how the drunkard is worse than the demoniac? We

pity the tormented demoniac ; we abhor the drunkard. We condole with the one ; we are indignant and irritated with the other. The snares of an enemy have possessed the demoniac ; his own counsels have possessed the drunkard. With the demoniac he is driven about a slave by his possessor ; with the demoniac he is fallen from his state of mind and manhood ; with him he staggers, falls, rolls a disgusting eye, foams and exhales nauseousness. He is disagreeable to his friends, ridiculous to his enemies, contemptible to his servants, loathsome to his domestics, scandalous and odious to all. Whilst all that call him acquaintance are indignant, and all that call him friend are distressed ; whilst his nearest relatives are miserable, and his children are squalid from neglect—wretched, perhaps, from want of care—wicked from example ; the drunkard sits in the house of crime, at the table of infamy, with his cup of weakness—his draught of poison—before him, and is there contending with his brother drunkard which shall most defame himself ; which shall show the greatest folly, which shall exhibit the lowest baseness, which shall most shatter his nerves, destroy his nature, and abuse and anger their common Lord and Creator.

St. Chrysostom has well described the effects of intemperance—"Paleness, weakness, laziness, folly." Pale, hanging cheeks, red, ulcered eyes, trembling hands, furious dreams, restless, distracted sleep : like murderers and persons of an affrighted conscience, so broken, so sick, so disorderly are the slumbers of the drunkard who wakes to misery. Show me a temperate man, and I will show you a prudent man ; show me a temperate man, and I will show you a virtuous man ; show me a temper-

ate man, and I will show you a prosperous man; show me a temperate man, and I will point out to you a wise man. For intemperance is the root of folly; intemperance is the seed of madness; intemperance is the fountain of uncleanness; intemperance is the well-head of injustice; intemperance is the poison-spring of unbelief; intemperance is the stream where each virtue drowns herself; intemperance is the cloud of fleshy vapor which rises over and darkens all the soul. "Wine," says the Proverb, "is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotousness. Whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise." "Wine drunken with excess," says Ecclesiasticus, "is bitter to the soul. The heat of drunkenness is the stumbling-block of the soul, lessening strength and causing wounds." Yes, lessening strength. There is an idea abroad that strong drink strengthens. Never was there a more fatal error. All stimulants to excitement, when taken to excess, strengthen at the moment, but leave the body weaker ever after. "Look not thou," says the Wise Man, "on the liquor when it is yellow, when it sparkleth in the glass: it goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and spread abroad poison like a basilisk." Like the honey with the sting in it, both go down together. The sweetness soon leaves the palate, but the sting has only commenced its work.

See the drunkard begin, but watch him till he ends his career of intoxication. He has set at table; he has filled his cups: he has invoked the companions of his guilty joy. His mirth has maddened into riot, then fevered into criminal passion, then lowered into obscene drivel, then sunk into stupor. He has uttered folly, and thought it wisdom; he has profused curses, when he

should have uttered blessings ; he has poured out filth, and mistaken it for wit ; the Christian has now left the scene, and human nature is fast following him ; reason fades away as folly grows more boisterous ; the madness of folly glides off too, and stupidity remains the only companion of drunken insanity. The room reels ; the table moves ; the man has fallen away, and the beast lies in his place. And even this brute is dead, all but the throat and belly, and these are sickly. Like the banquet of Sisera, it ends with driving a nail through the man's head. The very infidel, who in old times wrote against Christianity, could say this much of drunkenness—"That it knocks down the man, and nails him to the sensual intermixtures of the body."

What man loves to be despised ? Which of you will endure patiently the contempt of another man ? And yet every drunkard crowns his head with a mighty scorn. Putting himself beneath the lowest, degrading himself under the meanest. The boys laugh at him, children hoot him, and the criminal scorns him as he is led home like the cripple, lisping the imperfect noises of an infant, or babbling with a thick and spongy tongue, an empty head, a foolish heart. Woe and alas ! God of heaven ! dare I appeal to thee from amidst such a scene ? Thy creatures, too ! Whither has thy image departed from them ? To see a sensible man dishonor himself like the foolish, disgrace his friends like the impious, impoverish his family like the unjust, bring degradation on those who are dearest to him like the heartless, cast reproach on religion like the profane, destroy his body like the murderer and his soul like the infidel, become an appellation of scorn and a scene of derision to all men, and of

forgetfulness to himself. Where, O God, is thy image in this man? Where, divine Lord, are the marks of his baptism? Where, sacred heavens, are the features of your child? Call you yourself still a Christian? Name yourself yet a man? Where, then, are the commands of the Gospel? Where the precepts of the Church? Where even the laws of nature, the ties of humanity, and the instincts of self-preservation?

You have not gone so far, you are perhaps ready to tell me. You have not come to these excesses; nor are you so abandoned—the heavens forbid it!—in your vice. No; but you have made a beginning; you have already gone to a certain extent—you feel yourself going further. And where and when did the drunkard ever stop and say, “No further will I go,” and did not go further, unless death, in compassion, destroyed him in the flower before he had ripened into all those fruits which I have described? Drunkenness is a vice which the more it is indulged the less the appetite enjoys; the more the palate sickens and languishes from its satiety, and the more it craves. Providence has kindly limited the possible extent of indulging this degrading habit, or it would never stop till it had turned everything salutary and healing in nature into the means of self-destruction.

You have not gone to all the excesses which the constitution of your nature will allow of, but you have sown the seeds of those excesses. The habit is already, perhaps, planted within you; it has reached a certain bulk; it is increasing; it is striking its roots deeper and broader; it is intertwining its fibres more closely around your heart. You have no effectual will to stop its progress; it will allow of no check unless plucked out altogether;

it will of itself make increase. The difficulty of rooting out the habit is weekly greater by its weekly growth. Nothing grows upon human nature like that most abject of its propensities, that most degrading of its habits—drunkenness. And is it not a law of our fallen nature that the grossest and rankest productions grow most rife and abundant, and that without our taking thought or care for it? If, then, you have not reached all those excesses, you are in the way to them, and your readiness to excuse yourself is the surest proof that you love the vice, and that, unless arrested in your career by that cold hand which stops all our vices and brings them to their punishment, you will yet exhibit yourself a spectacle of all those excesses, deprived of the powers of body and mind, a mere animal corruption, your soul dead and intombed within your body, and your body itself with but a few useless organs left to be destroyed—not in the grave, indeed, but on this side of it, only to infect and afflict everything near you with wretchedness. And if the drunkard, finished in his vice, be such a spectacle before man on earth, what must he be to the just made perfect? What before those angels of light who look down upon human deeds? What to the sacred eyes of Him who, dying, redeemed our wickedness? What to the all-pervading contemplation of the omnipotent God? Will he not again at this spectacle be moved inwardly, and repent that he ever made man? And if he does not again send a deluge to destroy him here, will he not reserve him for the deluge of fire which will not be quenched? “Do not err,” says St. Paul; “neither fornicators, nor the servers of idols, nor adulterers, nor the unclean, nor thieves, nor misers, nor drunkards, nor cursers, nor plunderers shall possess

the kingdom of God." Into what a crowd St. Paul casts the drunkard! With the impure, with idolaters, with harlots, with adulterers, with cursers, with misers, with plunderers. What! some proud mind is ready to ask me, is the drunkard one with the impure? Is the drunkard one with the idolater? Do not object, O man! You have heard the divine laws. Do not interrogate me. Ask the Apostle, and he will still answer you that both are equally shut out from the kingdom of God. As this, then, is clear, why need you ask me to measure the enormity of your sin? As he stands without the gates, as he is excluded from the possession, as he is lost to salvation, as he is consigned to eternal torments, why need you reach to me the scales and weights that I may balance the proportion of iniquity between these vices? And why so anxious to ascertain the enormity of drunkenness, separate and alone, when it is never to be found alone, never unaccompanied by some of these horrid crimes, if not by all the wicked crowd of them? Is not drunkenness the fertile mother in whose womb all those vices are engendered? Are they not the accursed offspring of this parent? And shall not the mother-vice carry the curses of her brood? Go to the house of the drunkard; consider his family; look at his affairs; listen to the sounds that proceed from the house of drunkenness and the house of infamy as you pass; survey the insecurity of the public ways and of the night-streets; go to the hospital, to the house of charity, and the bed of wretchedness; enter the courts of justice, the prison and the condemned cell; look at the haggard features of the ironed criminal. Ask all these why they exist to distress you, and you will everywhere be answered by tales and recitals of the effects

of drunkenness. And the miseries, and the vices, and the sorrows, and the scenes of suffering which have harrowed up your soul were almost without exception either prepared by drinking or were undergone for procuring the means of satisfying this vice and the vices which spring from it.

Mere intoxication is but the starting-post of the drunkard's course. To what a train of roads does drunkenness point, like some portentous finger-post erected upon earth by the infernal powers to conduct to their dominions. Drunkenness—dissoluteness, debauchery, disease, the hospital, death. Drunkenness—evil company, cursing, swearing, gambling, profanity, infidelity, death in impenitence. Drunkenness—idleness, carelessness, destruction of property, ruin of family, poverty, destitution, death in abandonment. Drunkenness—riotousness, quarrelling, injuries, insults, inhuman fighting, sudden death. Drunkenness—lawless companions, thefts, robberies, plots, murders, the jail, the chain-gang, the gallows. Drunkenness—weakness, gloominess, wretchedness, melancholy, wild fantasies, black horrors, madness.

These are but a few of the courses of the drunkard. But, whilst the drunkard himself totters or crawls along his destined path to his destined end—without a sense of his shame, or a feeling of his condition, or a regard to his friends, or a thought for his family, or a reflection towards his soul, or one glimpse of his destination—is God silent? Are the heavens without knowledge? Does no eye see? Does no hand take note? God is silent but not inactive. The silence of God is the sinner's worst punishment. He no longer troubles the conscience; he has ceased to warn; he is silent. He contemplates the

drunkard's course, patiently collecting His wrath, like smoldering fire, and his vengeance, like black clouds, into his bosom. Why should he be in haste? God's time is eternity: and still as the drunkard heaps crime God heaps vengeance. Why should *he* hurry? God is all-powerful. What can escape him! The hour comes, and the tempest of God bursts. Why should it be visible? There are other drunkards to be handled by the same judgment. Hear God himself speaking by the mouth of Isaias: "I have been silent; I have held my peace; I was patient. My words shall break forth as one in labor; I will scatter them; I will wrap them up together in a whirlpool."

Have the divine terrors lost their power? What a proof of the hardening and stupefying effects of drunkenness! Your eyes, at least, are open to the consequences, and you are without excuse. Take in hand, then, the cup of delusion anew, and, with your eyes upon the consequences, however appalling, drink! Why should you startle? The white bubbles that float on the top of the cup—they are only the tears of your wife. Drink on! You have drained her happiness. Take the gloomy cup anew. Do you begin to hesitate once more? The drops look red—they are only the blood from your starved and neglected children. Drink, then, drink on. You have already drained their poor veins to utter impoverishment. Take the horrible cup anew. What! are you more dismayed than before? Yet the vision is true enough: it is only the gray hairs of your parents that float on the surface—you have drained their existence. Drink, then, drink on. But now you must take the cup, for alas! it is no longer the cup of choice, but the cup of habit; no

longer the cup of enjoyment, but the cup of punishment ; no longer the cup of sweet delusion, but the cup of necessity. Its pleasures are gone, and nothing remains but its bitterness. The cup has lost its charms, and the draught its enchantments ; from the mere force and necessity of habit you go on drinking its accumulating compound of miseries. It is thus that at last God punishes the sinner with his sins. For "in the hand of the Lord is the cup : He passes it from mouth to mouth," sings the Psalmist, and only its dregs are not annihilated. All the sinners of the earth shall drink of its bitterness."

But the hour is not yet come, though every cup of intoxication hurries it ; on goes the drunkard, thoughtless, senseless, despised, to his destruction. Look at that creature : how can I call him man, when he has lost all the qualities of manhood ? See him as he staggers on his way ; his frame shaken with excess, his head failing, floating heavily on his body, or falling over his side ; his squallid appearance ; his mouth of folly ; his eyes of wild, guilty insanity : his unmeaning look ; his incapable fury. He has come from the house of drunkenness. All that can be done for him, for some time to come, is to treat him like a helpless idiot ; to put him to his bed, if it be possible, until he recovers his existence, and a feeling of jaded melancholy, a wretchedness of mind and body, which he again seeks to drown and forget in another fit of intoxication ; until he at length rounds out his miserable remnant of life and is dissolved in the grave. Look at that young man. At present he is honest, useful, thriving ; esteemed by his friends, and respected by all who know him. But he is entering the house of drunkenness. He reads the lessons of life in the school

of vice, and every one is beginning to be uneasy with apprehension about him; to look towards his future; to prophesy his course and give him over as lost. He begins to suspect himself neglected, then to feel himself disregarded, then to know himself deserted, then abandoned, then shunned: and he reasons foolishly on the subject, for he has drunk of the wine of madness, and he abandons himself.

I know of no disorder so difficult of cure as the disease of confirmed drunkenness. Few recover. The vice, become habitual, has eaten away too much of the mind and reason to leave sufficient nerve and vigor for a strong and steadfast resolution. Far be it from me to discourage even those who have gone so deep. There are sufficient examples to show that they *may* recover if they *will* but take the means. But I must not dissemble the truth: I would warn the beginner, and those who are tempted to begin. I would entreat them to consider how rare and difficult it is to recover into habits of sobriety after having reached a certain point. Let the beginner draw instruction in time. Let him take to himself thought, arrest the beginnings, pluck out the habit whilst its roots are young and green, and shield himself with caution. Let him draw lessons from bad, as well as from good examples. There was a nation of heathens (the ancient Spartans) who held this vice in such horror that, though they never drank to excess themselves, they intoxicated their slaves, that they might show their children, by example, to what a condition drunkenness brings our nature. You, alas! have no occasion for such an expedient. In every street and on every road men calling themselves Christians will read you this lesson. The

land reels with drunkenness. Consider it well and take profit to yourselves. Turn over in your mind the anathemas of the Apostle and the woes of the prophet, until they inscribe themselves in your heart, and the fear of them becomes a portion of your being. Mark them written on the brow of the drunkard. Watch him in his career until you see them all accomplished. Write them over your door, inscribe them over your chimney-piece, in your chamber, on your table, in the bottom of every glass; utter them in your devotions; hear them in the sounds of every tavern as you pass, and read them on every sign-board. It is better you should pass your whole time in studying the woes of drunkenness than that you should spend your life in feeling them and your eternity in suffering for them.

Do you ask me how you are to break yourself from this degrading habit? The general rule is very simple. Have a willing mind; shun the occasion; fly idleness. Fix for yourself a measure in your friendly domestic meetings beyond which you are never, whatever be the occasion, to exceed: and never see the inside of a tavern. Be fully assured that you cannot go beyond your measure, however little, on one occasion without going beyond it always. Consider in what places and with what persons you are mostly tempted, and avoid them. "Those that love the danger shall perish in it." Let no motive, no wish to appear hospitable, no cruel invitations, no pressings of seeming friendship induce you to forget the friendship which you owe to yourself. Repeat your resolution each morning when you rise, and pray for strength to keep it. Examine how you have kept your engagement each evening when you go to rest. If you

have failed once, be not discouraged ; try again. Nothing delights the eye of Heaven more than to see us wrestling manfully with our infirmities, rising courageously after our falls, drawing humility from our weaknesses, and caution and strength from our humiliation. Only he who gives up in despair is conquered. Renew your resolution—strengthen it with prayer ; observe the occasion of your past fall and remove it. The last advice which I shall give you is one of great importance. Put yourself with all obedience under the guidance of a spiritual director. There is a sort of fascination about this vice which often renders the drunkard powerless for his own deliverance ; temptation acts upon him like a charm ; he requires the hand of another to free him from her enchantment. Fly, then, to your pastor. The grace of God will not be wanting. And let the consolations and the blessings of a conscience healed, of health recovered, of character restored, of affairs retrieved, of a family made happy, of friends returning with gladdened hearts, of the revival of life now, and of the future hopes which await your redemption from intemperance, be your encouragement.

“ Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light ; let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness.”—*St. Paul to the Romans*, xiii, 12, and *Gal.* v.

“ Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you suddenly.”—*Luke* xxi, 34.

“ He that is temperate shall prolong life.”—*Eccles.* xxxvii, 34.—(Bishop Ullathorne’s sermon on drunkenness.)

Sapientibus pauca !

CHAPTER IX.

THE LUKEWARM PRIEST ON HIS DEATH-BED.

A sudden and unprovided death is terrible, especially for the tepid priest. St. Gregory says very truly : “ Minus jacula feriunt quæ prævidentur.” (Hom. 35, in Evang.) He who has often thought of death, whose whole life is a preparation for death, is usually not so terrified when death comes at last. The temptations of hell, the thought of the approaching judgment, the uncertainty of salvation are terrible, especially for him whose conscience is not in order. They are especially terrible for the unhappy priest whom the Judge finds unprepared, who quickly banished the thought of death whenever it came to his mind.

But now whether prepared or not, he must die. His temporal as well as spiritual life has not always been well-ordered. Now he must first attend to his temporal affairs ; he must make his will. What debts remain yet unpaid ? What does he intend to leave to his house-keeper, his servants, and especially to his relatives ? It is well to settle all this before he dies, otherwise scandals and law-suits may rake up his mouldering bones in the grave.

Look at his books, his accounts. How have they been kept ? Is this money for Masses ? How many of the Masses have been said ? Is this money for the poor or for the church ? But the dying man's head is aching, he is confused. “ Let me alone,” he says ; “ do whatever you please with the money.”

The doctor, too, insists that the sick man needs rest,

Yes! rest! But what rest can there be for his tortured conscience.

The obligations of the priest are so numerous, so sacred. O! how easily he can fall into sin! The priest, too, has so much knowledge; he sins so often with open eyes. He forms his conscience so readily; the careless priest stifles his scruples so habitually. Alas! how many sacrifices does the unworthy priest commit while he seems not to feel even the slightest remorse!

All this the dying priest often felt and even acknowledged. Many a time he had resolved to make a retreat, but something always hindered him. He would have made a general confession when he first fell sick, but he found it too difficult. He would do so as soon as he got better. He has not got better, however, but worse and worse, and now—it is too late!

You will often find that when careless priests are dying they put off their confession much more than even lay people do. They allow themselves to be deceived with the vain hope that they will soon get better, that there is no danger of death, and so on.

The dying priest tries at last to make a general confession, but he is too weak, his mind is all confused. He mentions perhaps a few sins that trouble him the most; but he cannot enter into particulars. The confessor can get no clear answer to his questions. He tries to encourage the dying priest, tells him to make an act of contrition and recommends him to the mercy of God. But the dying man's conscience is not at rest. His temporal affairs are not in order. He knows it well. His conscience is in still greater disorder. Ah! now his conscience will not let him rest. "Recessit somnus ab

oculis meis et corruï corde præ sollicitudine. In quantam tribulationem deveni, in quos fluctus tristitiæ, qui jucundus eram et dilectus in potestate mea.

Nunc reminiscor malorum quæ feci in Jerusalem! Cognovi ergo quia propterea invenerunt me mala ista. Ecce pereō tristitia magna!" (I Mach. vi, 10.)

Alas! I have been a consecrated priest—how manifold, how grave were my obligations. I have been a parish-priest—how terrible were my responsibilities—I have committed so many, and so grievous sins—alas! what a strict judgment awaits me! I have begun *too* late to prepare for death. And where have I sinned? "In Jerusalem." In the very house of God. In the Holy of Holies.

The Son of man comes and I am not prepared. The Bridegroom comes and my lamp is not burning. My eternal Judge is at hand and I have no excuse, no defender.

There are only darkness and illusions in the soul that languishes in tepidity; but at the approach of death, at the dawn of the eternal day, all illusions disappear. The careless priest sees. *Peccator videbit*. Alas! what does he see? Around him he sees objects that he has loved too much, and which he must leave, perhaps forever. Behind him he sees a life short and precious which he should have spent in holy labors, but which he has wasted in useless and criminal actions.

Before him he sees eternity, and at its entrance a terrible tribunal, where he must be judged. Ah, sorrowful separations! bitter remembrances! gloomy forebodings!

And the unhappy priest has wandered over thorny paths only to arrive at such an end at last. He must bid

farewell to all that he has loved. The human heart is never without attachments. If we love not God, we will cling to creatures. The priest, who has so often repeated, "Sursum corda!" has allowed his own heart to become entangled in earthly affections. He loved, but his love did not always tend to sanctify and save others; it tended only to ruin himself and them. How many times have these beloved friends fettered his ministry! How many sins have they caused him to commit! He loved money! He, the representative of a God so poor that he had no place to lay his head!—he, a preacher of that Gospel which forbids to be solicitous even for the morrow. His love of money has often been for his parish a subject of scandal, and for himself the occasion of a thousand culpable distractions. "Ubi thesaurus vester est, ibi et cor vestrum erit." (Luke xii, 34.)

He loved his pastoral residence and took so much pains to render it commodious and agreeable! He loved gay company, amusements, a life of ease and pleasure. And now death comes to break all these ties, and to teach him that we leave not without sorrow what we have possessed with pleasure. • "Non relinquitur sine dolore quod cum delectatione retinetur." (St. Aug.) O death! if the *thought of thee* is so bitter to him, who has fixed his heart in the goods of this world, what must be thy immediate presence! "O mors, quam amara est memoria tua homini pacem habenti in substantiis suis!" (Eccli. xli, 11.)

His soul is filled with bitter recollections. Behold, then, the end of life! Ah! the longest life appears short when on the point of ending! He recalls all the opportunities he had to do good, the treasures of merit he could easily have amassed, so many ordinary actions that he

could have sanctified by a good intention! "I had to deny myself," he sighs, "only for a few fleeting years, only for a few days! What! I could, by a few slight sacrifices, have opened the door to everlasting delights, and I have preferred to prepare the way to a death full of terrors, perhaps to torments without end! Where was my reason? Where was my self-love? Ah! the pleasure of dying without pain is well worth *the pain of living without pleasure.*

The unhappy priest remembers the evil he has done. Now he beholds everything in its true light. A divine light enlightens his soul. A thousand doubts that he had despised as scruples, now appear very serious. What he looked upon as trifles, now appear as grievous crimes. Everything fills him with doubt and alarm. Decisions given without reflection, sacraments refused, or conferred without sufficient reason, the sick and dying so rarely visited, the recitation of the divine office, the celebration of Mass, the observance of the rubrics, in all of which he discovers so many sins of inattention, irreverence, routine, and perhaps profanation! As long as he was strong and healthy, he never paid attention to these faults. He forgot the holiness and justice of God, the sanctity of his state, the gravity and the extent of his obligations. Now he realizes all. *Nunc reminiscor.* Ah! would that I had reflected sooner on my sacred obligations, the engagements that I contracted with the Lord, the graces that he showed me in my infancy, in my youth, during my whole life, and the ingratitude with which I have repaid so many benefits. *Nunc reminiscor.* Now I remember the many charitable warnings I have received, the many times I have stifled the voice of my conscience, the many

times I have offended God ! I who have been separated from the world, consecrated to the service of the altar, elevated to the rank of ambassador of Jesus Christ ! And I have sinned in Jerusalem ; I have sinned in the house of God, in his sanctuary, in the land of the saints ! In terra sanctorum iniqua gessit, et non videbit gloriam Domini. (Isai. xxvi, 10.) Nunc reminiscor malorum quæ feci in Jerusalem. (Mach. vi, 12.)

The unhappy priest is filled with gloomy forebodings. Soon he will meet his fate. Two eternities are before him. Which shall be his ? He asks his conscience. O eternity ! O dreadful thought ! No one knows whether he is worthy of love or of hatred. What fills the good priest with the greatest confidence at the hour of death, is a source of terror to the tepid priest. *Ego diligentes me diligo.* (Prov. viii, 17.)

In qua mensurâ mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis. (Matt. vii, 2.) O how anxiously he tries to fathom the abyss of God's judgments ! What reception will the adorable Master give me who have served him so slothfully ? Can he say to me : "Euge, serve bone et fidelis ?" How will he regard his slothful and unworthy minister who has spent his life in offending him ? What answer can I give to the dreadful summons. "Redde rationem villicationis tuæ !" (Luke xvi, 2.) These thoughts affright the unhappy priest. He is soon to appear before his judge. In another moment he will know his fate. Ah ! if he could retrace his steps ! But no. He must die. His hour has come ! Oh ! sad fate ! Ah ! if he could remain yet awhile on earth ! But no ! He must depart. *Manere satagit, ire compellitur.* (St. Lawrent. Justin.)

But see, a fellow priest approaches the dying sinner

and endeavors to raise his drooping spirits. He speaks to the dying man of God's mercy. He shows him the crucifix. He presses it to his lips; he lays it on his heart. In the name of God he offers him the pardon of all his sins, however numerous and enormous, provided he sincerely repents. But if the unfortunate man has resisted the grace of God so long, will he now be able to make an act of hope? The priest pronounces over him the sacramental words of absolution. But what if the dying sinner has confessed without true sorrow, as he has been in the habit of doing?

Jesus himself comes to fortify him with his divine Presence. But what if the unhappy priest receives the viaticum with the same tepidity with which he received the Bread of life every day at the altar!

The Church redoubles her tenderness and her cares in this decisive moment. She calls to his aid all the saints of heaven. She imprints the sacred unction on all his senses; she exhorts him to leave this world for a better one. Ah! these pious prayers and ceremonies so full of consolation for the good priest, what consolation can they bring to him who has led a careless life and who dies cold and unprepared?

Let us not be, then, of the number of those priests who have wisdom only for others, who prepare others for death and neglect to prepare themselves. O my God, with the help of thy grace I will shake off this enervating sloth. Let me spend every moment that yet remains to me, in expiation of my sins, and in preparing for the dread hour of death.

Maria, mater gratiæ, mater misericordiæ, tu nos ab hoste protege, et mortis hora suscipe.

CHAPTER X.

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT OF THE LUKEWARM PRIEST.

During his life on earth the priest enjoys great privileges ; but if he appears as sinner before the judgment of Christ, his only privilege will be that he will find his judge more terrible ; that he will have to undergo a more rigorous examination and a more severe judgment.

1. *The lukewarm priest finds a more terrible judge.*

It is the Lord of heaven and earth, the God of justice, who is his judge. “ Quid faciemus,” exclaims St. Augustine, “ sub tanti judicii majestate.” If it is the affliction of afflictions for a lukewarm priest, to die and leave what he was but too much attached to : *Dolor in exitu* ; if his departure for the other world is accompanied by the most cruel agony : *Horror in transitu* ; there is nothing that equals the terror with which he is seized when he appears before God who is his judge. *Sudor in conspectu Dei.* (S. Bern.) Like the other children of men, whom he should have undeceived of their errors, this ambassador of Jesus Christ loved vanities and falsehoods. Like them, he slept his sleep : *Dormierunt somnum suum.* (Ps. lxxv, 6.) Death rouses him ; all disappears around him ; *Velut somnium surgentium.* (Ps. lxxii, 20.) O sleep, O horrible awakening for him who, being under the obligation of reminding his confrères of the eternal things, did not think of them himself. His mind always idle, did not know how to meditate nor to reflect ; now there is no longer any possibility for distraction. His soul is

enveloped in the light of this great God, who overwhelms him with the weight of his Majesty : Videte, quod ego sim solus. (Deut. xxxii, 39.) Do you see now, O foolish man, that I am the only one to be feared, to be served, and to be loved ?

2. This judge is also his Saviour ; but now he comes to avenge his despised blood, his graces trampled upon, his love not cared for. The more merciful he showed himself towards this priest, the more is his wrath excited against him who abused his mercy so much. The brothers of Joseph in Egypt trembled little when they beheld in him but the powerful minister, the arbiter of their fate, the master of their life. . . . But when they were told that it was Joseph their brother, the very one whom they sold, without the least pity and regard for his tears, Ego sum Joseph, frater vester, quem vendistis, (Gen. xlv, 4), then this word was for them like a flash of lightning ; they were seized with consternation, incapable to give an answer. Non poterant respondere fratres, nimio terrore perterriti. (Ibid. iii.)

Do you recognize me, will the Saviour say to this minister of his altars, whom he treated so long as a friend and brother. *Ego sum Jesus.* (Act. ix, 5.) Look at these scars ; they must remind you of what I have suffered for you. Behold the body which you touched every day with your impure hands. . . . Cruel man, what an impious war did you wage against me ! And who should have less persecuted me than you ? “ Ego sum Jesus, quem tu persequeris.” (Ibid.) My patience has been great ; it is time to let my justice have full scope. Ah ! how terrifying is it not for an ungrateful wretch to meet with his generous benefactor, for an unfaithful servant to

meet with his angry master, for a great culprit to meet with his judge who cannot be bribed ; for one to meet with his powerful enemy whose wrath he provoked and whose vengeance he can no more escape ?

The lukewarm priest will undergo a more rigorous examination. How many obligations are not imposed upon him as man, as Christian, as priest and as pastor. Not one of these titles will be forgotten in the account to be rendered. As man, I am bound to follow in everything the light of reason, to refer to the service of God, the use of all my faculties, of all the moments of my life which he gave me and which he preserved but for himself. As Christian, I am bound to lead the life of Jesus Christ. As priest, I am bound to surpass ordinary Christians in holiness as much as I am superior to them in dignity ; as pastor, I am bound to watch over my flock, to give it the threefold food of the word of God, of prayer, and of good example. “Pasce ore, pasce opere, pasce mente.” (S. Bern.) I shall clearly see and understand what I should have done at the altar, in the confessional, in the interior of the sanctuary, in my intercourse with the world.

At the same time that I see in the light of God all my obligations forgotten, ignored perhaps, in consequence of my criminal negligence ; I shall see also that it would have been very easy to comply with them, on account of the many graces and aids which the goodness of the Lord offered me, and opposite the twofold picture of the obligations imposed and of the graces lavished upon his minister in a prodigal manner, the sovereign judge will place that of my iniquities. *Redde rationem*, will he say to me ; I expected from you a more faithful observation of my

law, more perfect works than from my other servants ; I had told you that more is required of him to whom more has been given. How did you comply with every one of my precepts, especially with the first and greatest of all, with that of loving me with your whole heart, with your whole mind, with all your strength. *Redde rationem.* Render an account of your vocation, of your ordination, of your functions in the sanctuary. I have permitted you to act as supreme master in my house, you disposed of my mercy and of myself. Render an account of all the miracles which I have wrought at your voice and by your ministry, of so many moments which I have spent in your presence, in your hands, in your heart. *Redde rationem* ; how did you administer the treasures of my grace, apply my merits, set my blood to profit ? What did you do with those souls that I entrusted to your care ? My cross told you how far my love for them had gone ; what ! you let them go to destruction ? Through your fault they have fallen into hell ! You shall answer for their loss : *Quid proderit non puniri suo, si puniendus est alieno peccato ?* (St. Greg.)

3. The lukewarm priest shall undergo a more rigorous judgment. The judgment has begun. The charges are terrifying. The proofs are most clear. The accused has nothing to say in his defence. In vain would he undertake to appease his judge by shedding torrents of tears : *Porro triumphator in Israel non parcet, et pœnitudine non flectetur.* (I. Reg. xv, 29.) Call me unmerciful, will the Lord answer, the time for mercy is passed. Was it not long enough ? The cup which I was obliged to drink for you, was it not bitter enough, and your share in the merits of my suffering, was it not

abundant enough? Alas! I must then avenge myself, and of an enemy who was always so dear to me. Heu! vindicabor de inimicis meis. (Isai. i, 24.) I degrade you from the high rank to which my love had received you! I reject you, because you did not profit by the riches of my grace. Begone from me, accursed man, into fire everlasting! . . . And this accursed man—alas! he is a man, consecrated to God, by whom God used to bless the people!

O terrifying sentence, exclaims St. Bernard! "*Totus tremo atque horreo ad memoriam istius sententiæ.*" Represent to yourself the state of an unfortunate priest in the moment, in which he is crushed by the weight of this final sentence. What is passing in his mind, in his heart, in his whole being? What are his thoughts, his desires, his sorrows, his despair? He who was to judge the world with Jesus Christ, is not only judged himself, but he is irrevocably condemned to hell! He for whom the richest blessings were prepared is crushed by maledictions, cast into a fire so much the more devouring, the more inebriating the delights are which were prepared for him in heaven, locked up in a prison which is so much the more dark, the more brilliant and the more splendid the throne is, on which he was to shine in the heavenly Jerusalem!

O Jesus crucified for me, I hide myself in thy wounds, and there I will never cease to sigh until thou hast pardoned me: *Iuste iudex ultionis, donum fac remissionis, ante diem rationis. Quærens me sedisti lassus, redemisti crucem passus; tantus labor non sit cassus!* O Mary, thou canst save me still: wilt thou not do so?

Memorare, O piissima virgo Maria eti.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

If you look around you in the world you will see how often the hypocrite triumphs, how often the good, virtuous priest is calumniated and persecuted. We have had instances, even in this country, of good priests and even holy bishops being calumniated and punished unjustly. When you see all this, you are sometimes tempted to ask : “ Where is God’s justice ? Does God really take an interest in the affairs of men ? ”

There are two priests : One is pure, sober, honest and zealous ; but he knows not how to fawn and to flatter. He considers cringing flattery a sin, unworthy of a priest, unworthy of a man. He is thrust aside, left to live and die obscure, unnoticed.

The other is a vile hypocrite, a secret worshipper of money, or a foul slave of some shameful vice ; but he knows how to cloak his infamy, how to flatter his superiors ; he is elevated, he is honored.

And when you see this, you are often tempted to ask : “ Where is the justice of God ? ” The most grasping and avaricious are usually the wealthiest. The most cunning and ambitious are often elevated to the highest dignities. The boldest and most unscrupulous are usually the most successful. They know how to overawe, or at least how to silence authority.

Ah ! God seems now to sleep. Short-sighted men do not see his hand guiding the woof of history. But the

day shall come, as sure as God lives, when God will manifest his justice, when he will tear off the mask from the brow of the hypocrite ; when he will show to all that he is a just God ; when he will repay every one according to his works. "Justum et impium judicabit Deus." (Eccl. iii, 17.)

But when shall that day come. "No man knoweth," says Jesus Christ, "not even the angels of God."

As it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be when judgment-day comes. Men will be buying and selling, planning and building, and, all of a sudden, judgment-day will come !

There is a lighted room. Some boon companions have met. Some are carousing, some are gambling, some are talking foul tales and bandying jests that should not even be thought of among Christians. Who are these men ? Surely they are not priests. Those leering eyes, surely they are not the same that gazed but yesterday at the Virginal Body of Jesus Christ.

That foul tongue, can that be the same that only this morning pronounced the solemn words of consecration ?

Those lips defiled with the intoxicating cup—surely they are not the same that some short hours ago were reddened with the living Blood of God !

And those hands at the gambling table, surely they are not the same that were once consecrated with holy chrism, consecrated again and again by touching the adorable Body of Jesus Christ !

Look closely at those revellers. I ask again : Are they really priests ? But see ! the earth quakes beneath their feet ; the walls totter, a strange terror seizes them. They shriek, "O God ! it is judgment-day !" and they fall dead to the ground.

There is another. He is walking along the street under cover of the night. He is approaching the abode of infamy. Who is he? Can he be a consecrated priest? He has no sacerdotal dress. Has he perhaps laid aside his priestly garb that he may sin more freely? But see, a strange terror seizes him. He looks up to the darkened sky. The earth quakes beneath his feet. He shrieks, "O God, it is judgment-day," and falls dead with that impure desire in his heart!

There is another. He is counting his hoarded wealth. That money has been wrung from the poor—the poor laborer, the poor servant-girl. It is red with the blood of the poor; it is wet with the tears of the widow and the orphan. See the wolfish gleam in his eyes as he counts his gold. Is he a priest? A priest and a miser! a priest with a heart of stone! God forbid! But see, a strange terror seizes him. The walls totter, the earth quakes. He shrieks, "O God, it is judgment-day!" And he falls dead near his hoarded wealth!

There is a priest standing before the altar. He is clad in his sacerdotal vestments. He is about to begin the tremendous sacrifice. O God, look at his soul. It is black as hell with sin. With heart defiled he dares approach the holy altar. He raises his hand. He forms the sacred sign. He utters the awful words, "Judica me Deus." O sacrilegious priest, your prayer is heard! See the earth quakes beneath his feet. A strange terror seizes him. He shrieks, "O God, it is judgment-day!" and he falls dead at the altar.

Ah! what a day of terror for the unworthy priest, for the hypocrite!

Thousands of years ago when the world had become

corrupt, God cleansed the guilty world by the waters of the deluge. Again men sinned. At last God became man and cleansed the guilty world by his adorable heart's blood. But still men sinned. They have again become corrupt in spite of all that God has done to save them. This earth shall be purified once more, but not with water. It shall be purified by a deluge of fire !

When a house has been infected with the small-pox, the leprosy, or some other contagious disease, the bedding, the clothing, the very furniture are taken out and burnt. In like manner, God shall burn and purify this earth that has been so often defiled and infected by the sins of men.

How easy it is for God to burn up this earth ! In the twinkling of an eye, the air that we breathe, the waters of the ocean are one vast, roaring sea of flame !

In but a moment, those grand palaces, all that hoarded wealth, are but a heap of ashes ! Everywhere darkness, silence and death ! Primæval chaos broods once more over a lifeless, pulseless world !

But hark ! the solemn stillness is broken. The wild, unearthly sound of the angel's trumpet is heard. It reaches the highest heavens ; it penetrates the deepest depths of hell ! " Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment ! "

O that awful summons ! The damned hear it in the darkest dungeons of hell. Slowly and sullenly they arise in obedience to the summons. They howl, they rave, they blaspheme in mad despair, for they know that new torments await them. Fain would they bury themselves in hell's deepest fires ; but the almighty power of God is on them, and come they must !

" All shall arise," says St. Paul, " but not all shall be

glorified." Some shall be brighter than the sun; while others shall be black and hideous as the demons of hell!

O what will be the joy of the good priest as he comes down from heaven and meets again his body all beautiful and glorified. During life his body was sickly, suffering and despised, his body was crucified by fasting and penance. Ah, now it is fairer than the morning star, radiant with immortal glory. "O blessed body," the good priest cries, "faithful companion of my sufferings and trials; come, rejoice with me. The hour of your triumph has come. You were despised during life. You were worn out by penance, by suffering, by hard labor. You suffered with me. Come now, rejoice with me forever!

But, O God! what shall be the despair of the unworthy priest, when his guilty soul comes forth from the fiery dungeon of hell, when he is forced to re-enter his foul body more loathsome than hell itself. Ah! that unworthy priest was so vain of his beauty, so desirous to draw upon himself the admiring gaze of all. Just God! what is his shame and agony now on judgment-day when he sees that very body all hideous and loathsome—a shapeless monster of hell! what is his agony when he is forced to appear before the world, branded with all his shameful crimes.

A certain criminal was once condemned to suffer an extraordinary punishment. A dead body was taken out of the charnel-house. It was black as if the man had died of the black plague. This corpse was fastened to the living criminal, so that he could not cast it off. Its hands were tied to his hands; its feet to his feet; its face pressed to his face. The unhappy man shrieked and trembled with horror when he saw the foul burden

that he was condemned to bear ; but when he felt its cold, clammy weight pressing upon him, the very blood froze in his veins. Wherever he went, in the darkness of night, in the blessed light of day, this load of black death was his only companion. Whenever the people saw him they shrieked and fled away in terror. Even the very beasts howled with affright when they saw him. The corpse soon began to rot. The worms crept in and crept out. They crawled over the body of the unhappy man. They crept into his eyes, into his ears, into his nostrils, into his very brain ! The wretched criminal howled with rage and pain ; he bit his tongue ; he dashed his head against the rocks. At length he fell down and died beneath his horrid load.

Ah ! see the lost soul of that unworthy priest. He recoils in horror from his foul, monstrous body. He would rather plunge into hell's deepest fires than enter that loathsome corpse ! And this shall be my dwelling-place forever ! Ah ! yes, I have chosen it. I have preferred this accursed body to heaven, to God himself. In the fury of my passions I have often wished that I could cast aside my spiritual nature. I have wished to degrade myself to the level of the brute. Just God ! this horrid wish is now fulfilled !

The lost soul is forced to re-enter the body. In an instant the hellish flames that torture the soul are communicated to the body. The risen body will take its form and its qualities from the soul that animates it. It was sin that brought disease, deformity and death into the world. The more sinful, then, the soul is, the more hideous and deformed shall the body appear. Every sin that defiles the soul shall also disfigure the risen body. In this life

you see the poor crawling worm bury itself in its tomb, and then arise a beautiful butterfly. So it will be with the just on judgment-day ; but with the wicked it will be just the reverse.

Those who in this world were admired for their wealth, their honors, their gay life of pleasure, their sensual beauty, shall arise from the grave vile, loathsome, crawling worms. Behold the unworthy priest, once so vain of his beauty, standing now before the whole world as a disgusting leper, as one struck by God. He howls, he gnashes his teeth. His features are convulsed with rage and despair. His palsied limbs tremble beneath the weight of his bloated body. He is covered with foul ulcers. He appears more loathsome than Job on the dung-hill. The poison of his crimes has penetrated even into the very marrow of his bones ! Where are now his former admirers ? Ha ! every one turns from him in horror and disgust. “ *Et omnis qui viderit te, resiliet a te.*” (Nahum. iii, 7.)

From the same grave-yard rise the good and the wicked. What a shame and confusion for the bad priest when he beholds around him many sheep of his own flock with their bodies shining with the splendor of God, whilst his own body is marked with the seal of reprobation !

And now a brilliant light appears in the heavens ; it is the sign of the Son of Man—the sign of the holy cross. O, how beautiful, how consoling is this sign to the good priest ! How full of terror to the damned !

“ Ha ! ” shrieks the unworthy priest, there is the cross. I was marked with that holy sign in baptism, consecrated with that sign on the day of my ordination ; but I have been an enemy of the cross of Christ. My life has been

that of a heathen rather than of a Christian. That cross was crimsoned for my sake with the Blood of Jesus Christ! By my sins I have nailed him to the cross, who is now to judge me.

And now a light more brilliant still illumines the sky. It is brighter than ten thousand suns. Upon the refulgent clouds of heaven appears one who is like unto the Son of Man. He is fairer than the morning star. He is clothed with majesty and glory. Ah, yes, it is Jesus, the Son of God, the judge of the living and the dead. He appears no longer as a tiny babe, trembling and weeping in his mother's arms. He appears no longer as a criminal on the cross, with outstretched arms to invite the sinner. He no longer hides his glory beneath the humble veils of the Sacrament. Ah, no! he appears now in all his majesty and might, as the just Judge, who holds in his hands the keys of death and hell.

Ah! who shall describe the joy of the pure, faithful priests as with bodily eyes they behold their Saviour in all his glory and beauty! In a transport of delight they fly into the air; they soar aloft like eagles; they worship the footstool of their Saviour and their God.

But who shall describe the terror of the unworthy priest when he beholds that Jesus whom he so often despised and rejected, whom he scourged and crucified by his sins—that unworthy priest who had no love, no reverence for Jesus hidden in the Sacrament of his love. *Videntes turbabuntur timore horribili. . . dicentes intra se, pœnitentiam agentes.* But too late, O frightful penance! *Nos insensati! . . . Ecce quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei.* (Sap. v, 2, 3.)

And now Jesus sends forth his angels to separate the

wicked from the good, to separate the goats from the sheep.

Here on earth the good and wicked are found so often side by side. You find unhappy priests who are a disgrace to the Church, who scandalize the Protestant and the infidel, who keep so many out of the Church, by their bad example. Such unworthy priests are but rotten branches; they are poison weeds in the beautiful garden of the Church.

Our Lord tells us of a certain man who sowed good seed in his field. Now while the servants were sleeping, the enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. The wheat grew apace; but the weeds grew also and appeared among the wheat. The servants then went to the master and said: "Lord, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then come the weeds?" And the master answered: "That is the work of the enemy." And the servants said: "Lord, shall we pluck up the weeds?" And the master answered: "No; lest you pluck up the good wheat together with the weeds. Let them grow together till the harvest time. When the harvest time comes I will say to the reapers: Go, gather the weeds; tie them into bundles and cast them into the fire; but the wheat you shall place carefully in my granary."

Yes, at the harvest-time, on judgment-day, the angels shall go forth and separate the weeds from the wheat. They shall separate the wicked from the good; they shall place the good on the right, but the wicked shall be thrust to the left with the devils.

The unworthy priest is thrust to the left while he sees so many of his flock placed on the right.

Can you imagine anything more ignominious, "than to see the pastors on the same side with the goats, the fishers of men rejected with the bad fish, the laborers of the vineyard delivered up to the flames together with the rotten branches?" Isaias represents the lost priest under the figure of a great general who, after losing the battle, makes useless efforts to escape. He throws aside his insignia; he disguises himself; he tries to hide himself among the crowd. But where shall the unworthy priest hide himself? Can he throw aside his sacerdotal character? Once it was his glory and honor, but now it is his shame and confusion. *Ubi derelinquentis gloriam vestram?* (Isai. x, 3.) You shall drink of the cup of the most bitter confusion.

When our dear Lord was herē on earth, in the days of his suffering and humiliation, he allowed men to do with him whatever they willed. He was given over to the mercy of a troop of drunken soldiers. He was stripped and scourged like a slave. He was mocked and crowned with thorns. The executioners tied his hands, and threw an old red rag over his bleeding shoulders. In this sad plight Jesus is brought before the heathen governor Pontius Pilate. The voluptuous judge is filled with horror and disgust at the sight of Jesus all mangled and bleeding. He brings the Saviour of the world upon the balcony. Down below on the streets is a sea of upturned faces. The cruel rabble are clamoring for the blood of Christ. There Jesus stands, his hands tied, his thorn-crowned head bent down in shame and agony. And Pilate with a gesture of contempt, lifts the vile rag that covers the bleeding body of Jesus and shows him to the people! "*Ecce homo!*" he cries. "Behold the man!

Behold your King!" O God, what a dishonor, what a humiliation for the son of God, the son of the immaculate virgin!

Ah! as sure as God lives, that scene shall be repeated on the day of judgment. But then the characters shall be reversed. On that day Jesus, the God of truth, shall sit on the throne of justice; he shall bring forth the hypocrite, that unworthy priest; he shall tear from his brow the mask of hypocrisy; he shall lift up the veil that now hides his crimes; he shall show him in all his hideousness. "Ecce homo!" he will say. "Ecce homo et opera ejus!" Behold this priest; behold his works. "Thou hast dishonored me in secret," says the Lord by his prophet; "I shall dishonor thee in sight of the sun and before the eyes of the whole world." (II. Kings xii, 12.)

The great St. Jerome led for many years a life of penance. For many years he defended the Church and guided souls in the path of virtue. His writings still live; they continue and shall continue to encourage and save souls to the end of time; and yet, withal, this great saint trembled at the very thought of judgment. He declares that the clangor of the last trumpet was ever ringing in his ears. "*Quoties diem judicii cogito, toties corde et ore contremisco.*"

Not only the Israelites, but even the very mountains trembled before the awful majesty of God. If then God's majesty was so terrible at the time of the promulgation of the law, how terrible will it be when the Lord comes to judge those who have broken and despised the law? When our Lord became man and appeared on earth, many doubted his Divinity. They said he was Elias,

Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Ah! on judgment day all men shall acknowledge him to be the living and holy God. "*Cognoscetur Dominus, judicia faciens.*" (Ps. ix, 17.) Now God seems to sleep. The unworthy priest goes on for years, committing the most infamous crimes. He is not called to account; he is not blamed; he is not punished. Ah! on judgment day the unhappy man shall see that all his crimes are remembered. "*Cognoscetur Dominus, judicia faciens.*" "*A facie ejus cruciabuntur populi.*" (Joel ii, 6.)

Jesus appeared to his enemies in the garden of Gethsemane. It was night. He was alone. He was pale. His face was bedewed with a bloody sweat. His soul was sad unto death,—and yet the moment he appeared, the moment he spoke, "*Ego sum,*" that very instant his enemies fell upon the ground in mortal terror. Ah, what shall be the terror of his enemies on judgment day when he appears in all his majesty and glory, surrounded by myriads of angels!

"*Quis mihi hoc tribuat,*" cries the saintly Job, "*ut in inferno protegas me donec pertranseat furor tuus.*" (xiv, 13.)

Look at the tiny brook that flows so gently through the smiling meads. Place a high wall before it, and see with what fury it will at last burst through the obstruction.

If the tiny brook has such mighty power when its course is interrupted, what will be the long locked up force of the mighty cataract of God's vengeance! The longer God waits the more intolerable will be his vengeance. "*Volens Deus ostendere iram suam,*" says the Apostle, "*sustinuit in multa patientia.*" (Rom. ix, 22.)

The royal prophet trembled at the very thought of

God's judgments. "A judiciis tuis timui." (Ps. xviii, 120.)

Ah! even Felix the heathen judge grew pale and trembled with terror in every limb.

Ah! if even the greatest saints, if even the very heathens trembled at the very thought of judgment, what will be the terror of the sinners, what will be the terror of the unworthy priest when he stands in reality before his eternal judge? He will tremble at the sight of the Lamb. he will try to hide himself from the wrath of the Lamb. But why? Is a lamb, then, so terrible? Ah! this is the very lamb whom the bad priest has so many times exposed on the altar to the faithful. Ecce Agnus Dei. . . . This is the very Lamb whom the sacrilegious priest has so often outraged and trampled under foot. This divine Lamb comes not to take away the sins of the world, but to punish every sin with all the rigor of his justice.

Ah! look at the divine Lamb. Did he ever before appear so noble, so amiable? What majesty, and yet what winning sweetness in his countenance! Is he not indeed the most beautiful of the children of men? Ah! what a fearful fate to gaze on Jesus and to read in his wounds only the sentence of death! To see Jesus only for a moment and then to lose him forever! *Quam amarum est Christum videre et perdere!* (St. Augustine.)

During life the unworthy priest judged others so often in the tribunal of penance. He was the representative of Jesus Christ, invested with his divine authority; he was seated so often on the throne of justice and clemency. He summoned before his tribunal the people of God to bind or to absolve them. Now he is judge no

longer. His divine authority is taken from him. He stands now accused before the judgment seat of Christ. Behold him! He is, in the terrible language of St. Jude, an angel fallen from his high estate, disinherited and uncrowned. He comes forth from the darkness of hell, bound with everlasting chains. He comes forth from that darkness where he has been held in reserve for the great day of doom.

See the eyes of all men, the eyes of heaven and hell fixed on this fallen angel, this priestly criminal! He is standing before an unerring judge, an inexorable judge! "*Voca nomen ejus: Absque misericordia:*" (Os. i, 6.) The time of mercy is past. During life the faithless shepherd showed no mercy to his own soul, no mercy to the feeble lambs confided to his care. He suffered them to perish; he himself even led them to ruin.

The day of mercy is past, the day of justice has begun! *Dies iræ, dies illa, calamitatis et miseræ, dies magna et amara valde.*

The book of conscience is now opened. The eternal judge shall manifest the secrets of all hearts: *Manifestabit consilia cordium.* (1 Cor. iv, 5.) He will first manifest the secrets of his own heart, and then those of all men, especially of bad priests. This manifestation of hearts will show the unerring justice of God. At that solemn moment every one will see how great, how tender, how sweet and how generous was the heart of Jesus towards his faithful servants; every one will see how good and patient Jesus was even towards his very enemies; every one will see the inexhaustible treasures of his mercy, the numberless sources of his charity, the holy artifices of his grace to bring back ungrateful souls to his friendship.

Perhaps the memory of the unworthy priest was honored on earth. His sinful body rested in a marble tomb, in consecrated ground. During life he knew so well how to play the hypocrite. He stole the livery of heaven to serve the devil in. He put on the mask of virtue and decorum to succeed in his infamous crimes, to ruin the victims of his guilty passions, to blacken the fair name of those who were opposed to his wicked designs. Some he drew into his snares so gradually, so artfully, that they seemed hardly aware of his hellish influence. Before others he flashed his temptations so suddenly, so vividly that it seemed impossible for them to resist.

His good bishop, perhaps, knew his crimes, at least in part. How could they remain hidden? But what could the good bishop do? How often he warned the unhappy priest; but what did his warnings avail? What was the good bishop to do? Tear the mask from the brow of the hypocrite? Expel him from the altar he had profaned, from the parish he had scandalized? His crimes were known to but a few. Was the bishop to publish them to the whole world? What a scandal to the weak! What a triumph for the heretic and the scoffing infidel! The good bishop prayed, and waited and hoped. O how many a prayer ascended to the throne of God. "Just and holy God, either convert this wolf or take him away from the flock."

On judgment-day the inmost baseness of his heart shall be made manifest to all. He shall be held up to public execration.

Even the good works that the unhappy priest performed, shall be carefully examined on the day of judgment. Ah, how many things that he and others looked

upon as solid gold, as pure diamond, will turn to have been only gilded brass ! Even many of his good works will prove to be, as St. Paul says, but chaff and stubble, fit only for the flames. (I Cor. iii, 12.)

That fiery zeal for the glory of God was after all but a cloak to hide his secret crimes. That untiring diligence in building a grand Church, in paying off a heavy debt, was all dictated by ambition. He hoped thereby to draw upon himself the admiring gaze of his ecclesiastical superiors. He hoped to be promoted one day to a better parish ; he hoped to be elevated one day even to the episcopal throne.

Uniuscujusque opus manifestum erit ; dies enim Domini declarabit." (I. Cor. iii, 13.) The motives that led him to become a priest will also be made known on that day. "Quomodo intrasti ?" Was it really love of God, love of souls that led him to become a priest, or was it merely to have an easy living ? "Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubescio ;" ergo sacerdos ero. "Quomodo vixisti ?" What kind of life did he lead as a priest ? How did he fulfil all the duties of his office ? The Council of Trent says : "The priest should be for his people a living model, a pattern of every virtue." (Sess. 22. de Reform. c. i.) Did he always appear at the heavenly banquet in the nuptial robe of grace ? Did he not sometimes offer up the spotless lamb with a soul defiled by mortal sin ? Did he not sometimes dishonor the tribunal of penance by absolving others while he himself was in mortal sin ? Did he not sometimes profane the precious Blood of Jesus Christ by absolving those who were evidently unfit for absolution ? Did he not by his rudeness and ill-temper sometimes send away those who

were disposed for absolution? Did he not dishonor the word of God by leading a life utterly opposed to the commandments of God?

“Et quomodo rexisti?” How did he govern the flock confided to his care? Did he not, perhaps, as the prophet complains, “Clothe himself with the fleece of his sheep and nourish himself with their milk, while he took little or no pains to feed them, to lead them to good pastures, to guard them against the infernal wolf? Was he not more eager to take their money than to save their souls? Did he strengthen the weak? Did he heal the sick? Did he bind the wounded? Did he lift up the fallen? Did he seek those that were lost?” (Ezech. xxxiv, 4.)

What use did he make of the money that he received from the poor, the fruit of their hard labor, the fruit of their tears and their blood? Did he spend that money in relieving the distressed, in aiding the widow and the orphan? Or did he waste that money in gratifying his vanity, his sensuality? Or did he perhaps hoard it with grasping avarice?

God had consecrated him to pray every day in the name of the Church; to pray for the perseverance of the good and the conversion of sinners; and how often did he not neglect the divine office without sufficient causes? How often did he not recite it without attention and devotion, muttering the words with his lips while his heart was far away from God?

“Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou art steward no longer.” O, how terrible will these words sound in the ear of the unworthy priest as he stands before his eternal Judge. He has now to an-

swer for all the evil he has done, all the good he has left undone. All his sins now appear before him. They cry aloud, "*Opera tua sumus.*" He sees his sins now in their true light as they are before God. A log in the water appears so light; ah! how heavy it is when lying on the shore. In like manner, our sins appear to us so light in this world, but they shall weigh like mountains on the day of judgment.

The unworthy priest examined his conscience—he confessed his sins so carelessly; his soul seemed enveloped in a thick fog. He preferred to confess to a priest who was young and inexperienced, or at least to one who was easy-going, perhaps subject to the same frailties as himself. He had not the courage to keep to one confessor, but preferred to go each time to a stranger. Ah! on judgment day he shall see his sins in all their hideousness. "*Scrutabor Jerusalem in lucernas,*" says the Lord. "I shall search the conscience of the priest with the light of infinite holiness."

The unhappy priest shall have to answer, not only for his own sins, but also for the sins of his flock. How many a sin he could have hindered and did not! How many sinned, encouraged by his example!

The priest has, moreover, to give an account of the good that he has omitted, and the good that he has performed negligently. How many careless Catholics he might have converted; how many honest Protestants he might have brought to the true faith, had he only tried, What good he might have done by a kind word, by giving them a little catechism, by requesting them to say even one Hail Mary for his intention!

The unworthy priest, not content with ruining his own

soul, drags others with him to the infernal abyss. Had it not been for him, they might have been saved, they might be singing forever the praises of God in heaven. Placed at the corner-stone in the religious edifice, the unworthy priest, by his fall, has become a stumbling-block to others. Chosen to be the guardian of his brethren, he has become their murderer. When Lucifer fell from heaven he drew after him one-third of the angels. O God, how many souls does the bad priest draw after him to hell? Souls yet unborn, souls that he has never seen, will rise against him on the day of judgment, and curse him for having wrought their ruin.

On judgment-day the bad priest will also have to give an account of the graces he has received and abused. "From him who has received much, much also shall be required." (Luke xii, 48.) If, as our Lord assures us, we shall have to give an account of every idle word on judgment-day, shall we not have to give an account of every grace that we have received? Now God wishes us to be thankful for every grace and to show our thankfulness by co-operating with his grace. O, how many graces has not God bestowed upon each one of us? First, he has created us in preference to thousands of possible beings. Secondly, he has made us children of his Church in preference to thousands who remain in the darkness of heresy and heathenism. Thirdly, he has chosen us in preference to thousands of laymen in the Church. He has separated us from the world and called us to his service. "He has made us the dispensers of his divine mysteries."

Ah! what return have we made for all the talents he has bestowed upon us, natural as well as supernatural?

The servant who buried his master's talent was punished so severely ; and yet he did not throw away this talent ; he did not abuse it ; he simply buried it. Ah, Lord, what will be the punishment of the useless servant, of the unworthy priest, who has squandered his talents, who has used them only to ruin souls ?

The generosity of God to the priest during life shall be the measure of God's justice on the last day. "Cast the useless servant into utter darkness." (Matt. xxv, 30.)

The unhappy man became a priest of his own free will. He had so many years to prepare himself, to sound the depths of his heart. He had superiors, directors, books, retreats. No one forced him.

He took upon himself freely the care of souls ; that fearful responsibility ! He stepped in freely where even angels fear to tread. He even complained that the bishop did not give him a larger parish. Sacred God ! He murmured, because the bishop did not give him more souls to answer for on judgment-day !

The fallen priest has abused all the graces God offered him. There is no state of life so rich in graces as the priesthood. In every other state of life men are occupied with the things of this world ; they are occupied with affairs that naturally turn their hearts away from God. The layman lives in the world ; he must be solicitous about the things of this world. He must, nevertheless, strive continually to fix his thoughts on heavenly things. He must labor to acquire the goods of this world for the support of his family ; yet he must endeavor to keep his heart detached from all earthly goods. He is continually in danger of yielding to the false maxims, the bad examples around him. O how difficult it is for him to save his soul !

The priest, on the contrary, is separated from the world, and consecrated to the service of God. All his occupations, all his labors tend solely to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The obligations of the priest are indeed great and numerous; but they are all for God and for immortal souls; they all tend to the priest's own satisfaction. The voice of God, the voice of the Church, the voice of the people, the very dress he wears, the very name he bears, the very functions he performs—all cry to the priest continually: "Keep aloof. Do not meddle with worldly affairs. You are separated; you are consecrated; you belong to God."

The very dress that the priest wears, the very name that he bears, remind him continually that he must lead a life pure, pious and modest. The dignity of his office tells him that he must live every day so as to be worthy to approach the altar and receive the God of all holiness.

Ah! on judgment day the unworthy priest stands condemned before his eternal judge. He became a priest of his own free will, and he only dishonored the priesthood; he was everything but a priest. He vowed himself freely to the service of God, and he served every master, except God, aye, he served even the devil rather than God!

He took upon himself freely the sacred obligations of the priesthood, and yet he attended to everything else, busied himself with everything else except these sacred obligations.

The unhappy priest, it is true, was surrounded by many dangers, but he had also innumerable graces. "I will not leave you orphans," is the consoling promise of

Jesus Christ. "Lo, I am with you all days," he says. "Come to me all ye that are burdened and weary, and I will strengthen you." "Ask and you shall receive."

The sacraments are ever flowing fountains of grace. Every day of his life these blessed fountains were open to the priest.

Prayer is all-powerful with God. Our Lord has said: "Whatever you ask in prayer, you shall receive." And had not the priest the grace of prayer? Was he not even obliged by the Church to pray every day for at least an hour? Ah, how often did he complain because the Church obliged him to pray, though it was all for his own good. How often did he murmur and call the divine office an intolerable burden!

Grace is also the fruit of good works. And had not the priest every day numerous opportunities of performing good works?

Grace is granted to us by virtue of the communion of saints. And had not the priest the foremost rank in that communion; the foremost rank in the Church Militant, and consequently the principal share in all these graces? God bestows his graces most abundantly on those whom he has chosen as his favorites. And who is God's chosen favorite if not the priest? Did not God prefer him to all others? Did not God elevate him to a dignity higher than even that of the angels?

St. Thomas teaches that God proportions his grace to the state to which he calls us. How great, how innumerable then must be the graces of the priest, since his dignity is all but infinite!

O God! how many graces must not, then, the priest reject and trample upon before he can be lost! How many

have become saints, who received fewer graces than the unworthy priest has abused?

God was certainly as liberal to him as he was to so many other priests, who sanctified themselves by the very same graces. God made no distinction between him and his brother-priests till he distinguished himself by his sinful life.

For the majority of men the most torturing pain that can be inflicted on them is to be forced to reveal to others their most hidden, their most shameful crimes. There are many who prefer to commit suicide rather than to make such a confession. And even among those who confess their sins, how few tell all, how few confess all the circumstances, the secret workings of their heart! Ah! on judgment day the confession shall be entire.

A superior power possesses the unworthy priest and drags forth from the inmost recesses of his soul the loathsome crimes, the unworthy motives that have lurked there so long. An irresistible spell is on the tongue of the unworthy priest. He is forced to avow with the minutest detail all the dark, shameful thoughts and desires and deeds of his whole life.

In this life the unworthy priest tries to forget his crimes; he tries to hide them from his own eyes as well as from the eyes of others. On judgment-day he can hide them no longer. A vivid, dazzling light, as the prophet assures us, issues forth from the throne of God and envelops the sinner with its intolerable glare. "*Thronus ejus flammæ ignis—fluvius igneus rapidusque a facie ejus.*" (Dan. vii, 9.) Ah! the lost priest shall call upon the mountains to hide him from the shame of having to avow his sins before the whole universe. "In-

troibunt in speluncas petrarum et in voragines terræ," says the prophet. (Isai. ii, 19.) "Colles, cadite super nos." Evigilabunt in opprobrium ut videant semper." (Dan. xii, 2.)

When the wretched Adam was convicted of his crime, the brave Joshua called on him to confess his guilt. "Come," said he; "give glory to the Lord God." (Jos. vii, 19.) The unhappy man was obliged to make a public confession before being stoned to death. "Come, unworthy priest; give glory to the Lord God; avow thy crimes before being hurled back to the flames of hell."

He must avow the sins of childhood, the crimes of youth. The unworthy motives that induced him to become a priest, the sins against nature, the sins of infidelity and malice—all must be avowed as they appeared before God at the moment in which they were committed.

Here on earth, even the criminal on the scaffold often evokes our sympathy by an honest confession.

Moreover, an honest confession lightens the heart of the criminal and brings relief to his conscience. But on judgment day it will be just the reverse. Every word that the unhappy priest utters will but increase the hatred and scorn and loathing of the millions that are intently listening to his self-accusation. Every word that the unhappy priest utters, instead of relieving his heart, will but increase his shame, his rage, his remorse, and his despair.

When the wretched man sinned he felt a momentary pleasure in the gratification of his passions. Now those passions are dead; the fire of lust was long ago extinguished in the tomb. He can find nothing now to excuse or to palliate his crimes. His rage is powerless. He is

unable to utter even one word of threat or defiance against those who now mock and curse him.

Ah ! unhappy wretch ! he has dishonored his sacred calling ; he has abused the holiest confidence ; he has not only been a hireling—he has not only allowed the hellish wolf to carry off the lambs of the flock ; he has himself become a ravening wolf ; he has ruined those souls for which Jesus Christ shed his heart's blood.

“ The criminal is confounded when his crime is revealed.” (Jeremias ii. 26.) The unhappy priest cannot deny his guilt, he cannot excuse his crime. He cannot defend himself, he cannot hide himself, he cannot escape. “ Sic confusi sunt sacerdotes et prophetæ.” (Ibid.) The fallen priest will be condemned by the sacred unction, the sublime character of the priesthood. He was the prophet of the oracle of God ; the very sermons that he preached will condemn him. ‘ He shall stand before the throne of God condemned and silent. “ Et ipse obmutuit.”

In this life you sometimes behold a hardened criminal standing before his judge with defiant look, with marble-brow and contemptuous smile. His guilt is proven, his baseness and cunning are revealed ; he is to be forever cut off from society ; he has to suffer an ignominious death. He knows it all ; yet he stands before his judge bold and hardened. Ah ! on judgment day it shall be altogether different. The fallen priest shall stand before his eternal judge, pale, trembling, overwhelmed with shame and terror !

Ah ! now, on judgment day, the unhappy priest sees all the graces that God showered on him so liberally. He sees all the graces God had in store for him had he only been faithful. He sees the souls that were saved by his

ministry and the many more he might have saved had he only been faithful. During his sinful life he often tried to stifle his conscience by saying: "My obligations are too great, too numerous. I cannot fulfil them. My passions are too strong. I cannot resist them. The temptations around me are too numerous, too powerful. I cannot conquer them." But in the light of eternity he shall see that he only tried to deceive himself. Ah! he will say: "I could have done as well as thousands of others who are saved. With God's grace all things are possible. Had I tried in earnest, I would have found that a life of virtue is not so hard. I might have had a foretaste of heaven during life and of never-ending happiness in eternity. Jesus said: "My yoke is sweet and my burden is light," and I shook off that sweet yoke, that light burden, and for what? to carry forever the iron yoke of Satan, to bear forever the intolerable load of sin!

On the day of my consecration I renounced the world and its sinful pleasures; and yet I lived only for the world. I consecrated myself to the service of the altar, and yet I lived only to dishonor the altar of God.

I was not forced to become a priest. My hands and feet were not chained. I was not violently dragged into the sanctuary. I had years and years to prepare, to sound the depths of my heart. It was only after many prayers and trials and promises that the Church admitted me at last into the number of her servants.

The bishop who consecrated me asked publicly and solemnly, if I was worthy; if I was willing to take upon me and to fulfil the sacred obligations of the priesthood. I swore obedience to my bishop, an obedience unshaken

and perpetual. I vowed before the Church that I would bear the burden and heat of the day, that I would labor in the Lord's vineyard faithfully and diligently.

I vowed before the people that I would do my duty towards those committed to my charge, as a kind father, as a good shepherd. I made this vow and oath freely. No one could force me.

And, O God, just God ! how have I kept these vows ? I have blamed the world for having deceived me and led me astray ; but why did I mingle so much with the world ? O God ! I blame others, and I myself have deceived and led astray so many innocent souls !

I have blamed the devil for having tempted me and caused me to fall. Why did I seek so often the haunts of the devil—the occasions of sin ? Why did I not pray when I was tempted ? Ah ! the devil could not force me to do wrong. I blame the devil, and did I not work for him ? Did I not ruin souls ? Did I not do more harm than even the devil himself ?

I have blamed the people of my congregation for being the cause of my ruin ; and have they not more reason to cry out against me ? I have not been a good shepherd. I have been a hireling, a wolf in sheep's clothing. O how many lambs of the flock have been lost on my account ! "Judica me, Deus !" Judge me, O God. "Thou art just and thy judgments are right." "Etiam, Domine, Deus omnipotens ; vera et justa judicia tua." (Apoc. xvi, 7)

The layman, the man of the world, can offer at least some excuse for his sins. Whatever knowledge he has of God's laws comes to him mainly through the priest. Whatever he has learned from his parents, from books, from sermons, all comes ultimately from the priest. The

priest is the living Gospel of the layman. If the unworthy priest had not sufficient knowledge, he committed a crime in intruding upon the sacred ministry. If he had not sufficient talents, why did he choose so high and holy a state when God did not call him?

But the unhappy priest had knowledge enough; he had talents enough. He was even vain of his learning, vain of his eloquence. He was a doctor in Israel. He looked down with contempt upon those good priests who were pious and simple-minded. His people were proud of him. The good, simple people looked upon him as an oracle. O God of all sanctity! He used his learning, his talents, his influence as a glittering cloak to hide his deeds of darkness!

He knew that his crimes could not be utterly hidden. Suspicions and rumors were spread among the people. Ah! it was then that he preached with such eloquence against that very vice by which his own soul was defiled.

He was severe towards others, lest any one should suspect him of weakness. He put a heavy yoke on the shoulders of others, lest any one should suspect him of having cast off long ago the yoke of his divine Master. Ah! he knew his duty but too well. Look at all the means that he used to drown the remorse of conscience that tortured him. Why did he stay away so long from confession? Why did he abstain so often from saying Mass? Why did he even throw aside his breviary in despair and give up prayer for so long a time? Why did he so often drink to excess? Why did he so often wish that he had never become a priest? Was it not because his conscience tortured and terrified him? Ah, yes! He knew all his duties but too well! What, he—the doctor in Israel—he

did not know his duty, and nearly every day of his life he had to teach others! Day after day he repeated the terrible words: "Maledicti, qui declinant a mandatis tuis." And how often did he transgress the commandments of God! Did he not every day pronounce a malediction on his own guilty head? Ah, yes, he sinned with his eyes open. He sees it now. He does not deny it.

And yet who will assert that he sinned through malice? How often did he weep over his sins! How often did he promise on his knees to do better! He even cursed and hated himself for his weakness. How often did he envy the faith and fervor and simplicity of some pious soul in his parish! Ah! he promised to amend, but his promise was written on sand, it was made only to be broken. He wept, but his tears were soon forgotten in the maddening bowl, in impure pleasures. He wished to reform, to lead a pure and sober life, but his will was not in earnest. He made no serious efforts. He was unwilling to do violence to himself. He did not pray earnestly, perseveringly. He did not flee from, he did not cut off and cast away forever, the dangerous occasion of sin. And so he fell, again and again, deeper and deeper, till at last he was cut down in his sins.

And, oh! how many warnings did God give him before summoning him to give an account of his life.

Warnings! Ah! he remembers them all. How often did not the fear of death haunt him! What a strange feeling seized him at times as he stood by the death-bed of some one of his parishioners! What bitter regret, as he gazed on the corpse of some innocent child! Ah! he, too, was once innocent. Would to God he had died in his innocence ere the foul, hot breath of hell had blasted his soul!

How sad and terrified he felt whenever he was overtaken by a severe illness. What unspeakable melancholy overwhelmed him, especially in his last illness! Ah, well might he then repeat those words which he had so often said at Mass: "*Quare tristis es, anima mea, et quare conturbas me?*" And his conscience could tell him why. Ah, he had light enough. He knew his duty only too well.

But was it not blindness, the most terrible blindness, to remain thus in sin? Most assuredly it was. And this is one of the most frightful effects of sin—habitual sin—especially the sin of sacrilege.

Sin blinds the intellect and hardens the heart. He who sins against the known truth sins against the Holy Ghost; and "he that sins against the Holy Ghost," says our Lord, "shall not be forgiven, either in this life or in the next." Those that sin with open eyes, are at last struck with blindness.

O terrible fate! "*Excæcavit illos malitia eorum.*" (Wisd. ii, 21.) He neglected to do what he knew to be his duty. He neglected to do penance for his sins, though he knew that he was guilty; and at last he died hardened and impenitent.

Ah! God waited so long; God was so patient with him! But this delay only emboldened him to sin without restraint, to sin without remorse. For so many years he abused God's patient mercy. Ah, the hour of mercy is now past. The reign of justice has begun. He is standing before the judgment seat of Christ! How often did he himself preach to sinners! How often did he warn them—threaten them with God's vengeance if they did not give up sin. Was he in earnest then? Did he speak

from his heart? Ah! Now he knows from experience the terrible truth of his own words.

How many lay people will rise up on judgment day and condemn the unworthy priest! They had fewer means of grace than he. They were exposed to the same temptations as he, aye, even to greater temptations. While the priest dwelt in the sanctuary, they were forced to dwell in the very midst of Sodom. And yet they conquered their temptations, they did penance for their sins; they saved their souls, while he—the priest of God—is lost! “The inhabitants of Niniveh,” says Jesus, “shall rise up in judgment against the abuser of grace and condemn him.” (Matt. xii, 41.) “And many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit at the heavenly banquet, while the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. viii. 11.)

The good laymen who saved their souls in the world, even the very heathens, shall rise up in judgment against the unworthy priest. “Regina Austri surget in iudicio cum eo et condemnabit eum.” “Viri Ninivitæ surgent in iudicio cum illo et condemnabunt eum.” (Luke xi, 31.) “I declare to you,” says our Lord elsewhere, “it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha on the last day than for those who abuse the grace that God offers them.”

That rich merchant who is so kind to the poor, that generous-hearted servant girl will condemn that avaricious priest, whose heart was in his gold.

That virtuous married man who observed the laws of chastity according to his state, will condemn that unworthy priest who did not observe even the laws of nature.

That liquor-dealer, that bar-keeper who remained sober, though handling liquor continually, will condemn that unhappy priest who could not taste or even see liquor without drinking to excess.

That simple laborer, that poor old apple woman, who prayed continually, even while at work, will condemn that careless priest, who hardly ever prayed, except when the Church obliged him, and who even then prayed more with his lips than with his heart. Aye, even Protestants will rise up in judgment against the unworthy priest. How many of them were purer, more conscientious than he, though he had the privilege of nourishing his soul every day with the virginal Blood of Christ.

The many good priests who saved their souls will rise up and condemn the lost priest. They too had strong passions; they too had tender, affectionate hearts; they too had many violent temptations; and yet they conquered, or, if, at times, they fell, they straightway did penance. Look at the many good priests who are forced to live alone, fifty or a hundred miles away from the nearest priest. They have no eye to watch them, no arm to protect them, no hand to lift them up. How often are they tempted to discouragement, tempted to give up the struggle and retire into some religious Order; and yet they conquer their temptations; they save their souls, while the faithless priest is lost.

When Cain had murdered his innocent brother, the very blood of Abel cried to Heaven for vengeance; and God cursed Cain and set a mark on his brow; and Cain became a wanderer and vagabond on the face of the earth. O, if the bleeding corpse of Abel cried to Heaven for vengeance, what will be the cries of murdered souls on the

day of judgment ! St. John assures us that he heard the souls of the martyrs crying for vengeance on their murderers : “ How long, O Lord, wilt thou wait ? When wilt thou avenge our blood ? ” (Apoc. vi, 9.) O, if the blessed in heaven cry for vengeance, what will be the cries of ruined souls on the day of judgment !

The abuses which the unhappy priest suffered to creep in and take root in his parish ; the children that he allowed to grow up in ignorance ; the stray sheep that he neglected to seek ; the sinners whom he confirmed in sin by his bad example—that young woman who was so passionately addicted to the most shameful dances, who frequented lascivious theatres, who allowed sinful liberties ;—that fashionable married woman who sinned against the laws of marriage, against the most sacred laws of nature ;—that rich man who retained the occasion of sin in his very house ;—that unjust speculator who defrauded his creditors and never made restitution ;—those worldly-minded Christians who were but pagans at heart,—they all went to confession to him without any serious purpose of amendment, and yet he absolved them, though he knew that they were unworthy—they lived and died in their sins. Ha ! on judgment-day they all rise up against him, they call down God’s vengeance upon his guilty head.

The evil that men do lives after them: while their bodies lie rotting in the grave, the evil that they have done goes on ruining souls even to the day of doom !

Ah ! who shall describe the cries of all the souls that the wicked priest has ruined as they clamor now for vengeance ? That young man, that child, that young woman whom the unworthy priest led astray, seldom or never return to penance. The hellish lessons he so often

instilled into their minds penetrated like a subtle poison into the very marrow of their bones. Was it not he who taught them that such shameful deeds were innocent, that he meant no harm, that he intended only to cure them, to try them, or to sanctify them? Did he not assure them that he would take their sin upon his soul? Did he not tell them that every priest did such things? Did he not even threaten them with the vengeance of heaven if they refused? O just God! vengeance upon his guilty head! "*Usquequo, Domine, non judicas, non vindicas sanguinem nostrum.*" (Apoc. x, 6.)

"O Lord," the lost souls will cry, "had we had a good priest, we would have done penance like Niniveh; we would have given up sin and saved our souls. This wicked priest neglected his duty; he did not instruct us. His bad example kept us away from the sacraments and confirmed us in our sins."

I do not suppose that there ever was a priest who did not do some good to his fellow-men. You will often find priests who, though great sinners themselves, were the means of converting many a sinner and of leading many a soul on the path of virtue.

God, in his mercy, sometimes uses such men to save and to sanctify others. The unworthy priest saved and sanctified many souls; but, O God! how many did he ruin by his neglect, by his bad example!

O what a shame, what a humiliation for the unworthy priest to see on the right, so many souls whom he saved and sanctified; while he is thrust to the left with the devils! He sees on the right so many of the children that he baptized; he sees so many whom he absolved, so many whom he converted by his preaching; he sees

on the right, so many who loved him sincerely and whom he fondly loved ; he sees there so many priests whom he well knew, who had the same trials as he had, but who conquered, or at least sincerely repented ; he sees, on the right, the pious mother who bore him, who prayed for him, who was so proud and happy to see her son a priest of God ; aye, he sees, on the right, even the companions of his guilt who repented and confessed. If these, if so many thousands could lead pure, virtuous lives, or at least repent sincerely, why could not he ? Ah, the unhappy priest stretches his hands toward them now in his sore distress. “*Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei !*” But his prayer comes too late. These good souls are no longer his friends. Ah, no ! he has not one friend to intercede for him. The time of pardon is past.

Imagine the shame and the humiliation of those hoary hypocrites whose infamy is recorded in the book of Daniel. They were the venerable judges of the people. Their locks were silvered with age and wisdom. They were looked up to as the incorruptible guardians of justice and innocence. Whether they accuse or acquit, whether they absolve or condemn, their word is regarded as an oracle of heaven. They accuse the chaste Susanna of a shameful crime. They declare with one voice that her crime deserves death. But the youthful Daniel comes forth to defend injured innocence. The immoral judges are convicted of the most infamous crimes. And the hoary hypocrites are led to execution amid the exclamations of the people, who bless God for having freed them from such shameless monsters. Imagine, if you can, the shame, the humiliation of these two wretches ! Their infamy is

unveiled. The mask of hypocrisy is torn from their brow. Their hoary locks are dragged down to the dust. The people who honored and revered them now heap scorn and malediction on the vile hypocrites who so long deceived them. Imagine, then, if you can, the shame and humiliation of the unworthy priest on the day of judgment. His crimes have perhaps been greater than those of the unjust judges. The dignity which he has dishonored has certainly been immensely higher. And he shall be put to shame, not in presence of a few hundred Israelites—he shall be confounded in presence of the whole universe.

O just God! the good people looked upon their pastor as a good, virtuous priest, and now they see that he was but a vile hypocrite! They looked upon him as a saint, and now they see that he was, in secret, the slave of the most shameful sins! Good God, they cry, who would have thought it? We looked upon him as a saint. We opened our hearts to him. We revealed to him our most secret sins, even our hidden thoughts and desires. He gave us such good advice in the confessional. He preached against sin with such zeal and eloquence. He appeared like a prophet of old, like an angel from heaven. We looked on him as the intimate friend of God, as a man whose every thought and desire was constantly dwelling upon heavenly things. Ah! how often did we not recommend ourselves to his prayers! We imagined that his prayers were all-powerful with God! How eager were we to receive the sacraments at his hands. We thought those hands were so pure and sacred! Even to think evil of him was a crime; and yet see what an infamous life he led in secret!

Just God! how the scoffer and the infidel shall mock

the fallen priest on the day of judgment. In this life they condemn the good priests with the wicked. They look upon every priest as a hypocrite. What then will they say on judgment-day when every hidden crime shall be revealed! That fallen priest preached so often against Protestants and infidels, and his own life was worse than theirs. He thundered so often against vice in every shape and his own life was one long tissue of crime! He spoke so bitterly against those who opposed or contradicted him; —and his hidden life was far worse than anything his most bitter enemies ever brought against him! “*Ecce tradam in manus eorum, quos odisti,*” says God by his prophet. “*In manus de quibus satiata est anima tua; et agent tecum in odio. Calicem bibes profundum et latum. Eris in derisum et in subsannationem quæ est capacissima.*” (Ezech. xxiii, 29, 32.)

God is faithful in his promises, faithful in his rewards, but also just and faithful in the punishments he has decreed. “The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but the words of God shall remain true eternally.”

O unworthy priest, all the sinners that have ever lived, from Cain even to the last sinner on earth; aye, the very demons of hell shall unite to mock thee, to heap insult and dishonor upon thee!

At last, the unhappy priest, stung by shame and remorse and rage against himself, falls on his knees before his just Judge and pronounces for the last time on earth the awful sentence he so often uttered at the foot of the altar: “*Judica me, Deus.*” “Judge me, O God. Thou art just and thy judgments are right.”

And there at the foot of the cross which was crimsoned to save him, in presence of that cross, where even the

robber and murderer found pardon, the unworthy priest receives his sentence. Ah, that cross! how many a sweet memory it recalls of graces and blessings received. He was signed with the cross in baptism. He received then the snow-white robe of grace and innocence. He was forgiven again and again in the sacrament of penance. He was nourished so often with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. He was elevated to the sublime dignity of the priesthood in preference to thousands. And all these graces he abused. Ah, now they rain upon his guilty head like flakes of fire, to burn, to torture, and to degrade him forever.

If a priest has the misfortune to commit certain very grievous sins, the holy Church decrees that he should be solemnly degraded from the sacred priesthood. The unhappy man is brought before the bishop. He is clad in his sacred vestments, the alb, the cincture, the maniple, the stole and priestly chasuble. He carries in his hands the sacred chalice, in which he was wont to consecrate the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Then the solemn sentence of degradation is pronounced against the guilty man. The sacred chalice is taken out of his hands. Never more shall he offer up the Sacrifice of the Lord's precious body and blood. He is stript of the golden chasuble. Never more shall he bear the glory of the priesthood. The stole is seized from off his neck, he has lost the bright stole of immortality. The snow-white alb is torn from him. He has lost the snow-white lustre of justice and innocence. And then his hands, ah! what a mournful sight, his hands on which, at the ordination, the holy oil was poured, his hands which so often touched the most sacred body of Jesus Christ, his hands are scraped with a

knife, the unction is taken off them, he has lost the unction of the Holy Ghost. Oh! how great must be the shame and misery of such a degraded being.

This degradation of the bad priest on earth is but a faint image of the state of degradation in which the lost priest will behold himself on the day of judgment. St. Chrysostom assures us that the unworthy priest, after having been convicted and confounded on judgment day, will be stripped, in the sight of heaven and earth, of all the honors of his priestly dignity; he will retain only the character of the priesthood for his eternal shame and confusion. "*In die judicii sacerdos spoliabitur sacerdotii dignitate, et erit inter infideles.*" (Hom. 40., in cap. 21 Matt.) "*Denudabunt te nudam, et ignominiâ plenam.*" (Ezech. xxiii., 26, 29.)

Ah! the day of judgment will be indeed a day of terror to the wicked. On that day God shall repay every one according to his works. Our Lord will turn to the good with a radiant countenance. He will praise them before the whole world. He will make known all their good deeds. Their visits to the sick, their secret alms, their heartfelt prayers, their hidden tears, their patience in sickness and suffering—all shall be made known. "Your left hand must not know what your right hand does." O blessed soul, rejoice! You are now calumniated, you must now suffer in secret. Ah, take courage! Those prayers and tears, those good works done in secret, O what glory they will bring you for all eternity. Listen to the consoling words of Jesus: "Come ye blessed of my Father," he says, "possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was naked, and you

clothed me. I was sick and in prison, and you visited me. Whatever you did to the least of my brethren, you did it to me. Come, enter into the joy of the Lord, and your joy no one can take from you." (John xvi, 32.) Then turning to the wicked on the left with the calm and terrible majesty of an all-holy judge, he pronounces the final, irrevocable sentence: "Depart from me, accursed, into everlasting fire." I created you to be sharers in my happiness; I redeemed you with my heart's blood; I loved you with everlasting love. Behold these wounds on my hands, on my feet, in my side; they bear witness to my love. But you repaid my love with hatred and my blessings with curses. You loved malediction and malediction shall be yours. It shall enfold you like a garment; it shall enter like oil into the very marrow of your bones. "Discedite, maledicti!" Depart into everlasting fire. Depart into that abode of woe where the worm shall never die; where the fire shall never quench; where there is no hope, no! not even the hope of death. During life you served the devil and his angels; you gave scandal; you led innocent souls astray. Depart, then, accursed, into that everlasting fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels!

See that mother kneeling before her son. That son is about to leave her, to cross the ocean. He shall never more see her face. And that mother kneels and gives him her parting *curse*. "My son," she says, "take with you my parting curse, the curse of your mother; and may my curse haunt you like a blood-red cloud whithersoever you go!"

How can that son be happy? And what is the curse of a mother, what is even the curse of the pope himself

to the curse of Jesus Christ? O that fearful malediction! It re-echoes forever through the caverns of hell, like the roar of mighty thunder. Woe! woe! "Maledicti! Maledicti!"

Ah! it is now in this moment of final separation that all the deep, radical love of the creature for his Creator breaks forth with wild, ungovernable fury. Now Jesus appears before the lost priest for the last time, radiant with unutterable beauty. Now the unhappy wretch realizes fully the wonderful mildness of Jesus, his patience, his unvarying kindness to him during life. The lost priest realizes now the wondrous love that Jesus bore him during his agony in the garden, in his sufferings, in his death on the cross and during those long days and nights and years in the Blessed Sacrament. And the doomed man knows, he feels that he is utterly unworthy of such pure and holy love. He calls on the mountains to bury him. Ah! he carries with him into the caverns of hell that beautiful vision of God from whom he has wilfully separated himself for all eternity! The final sentence of condemnation has been pronounced by the eternal judge.

Suddenly a whirlwind of flames envelopes the damned; the bottomless pit yawns beneath their feet; a confused sound of wailing, shrieks, and blasphemies is heard, and the bottomless pit is sealed forever with the seal of the omnipotent God who holds in his hands the keys of death and hell. "And the just shall go into everlasting life, and the wicked into everlasting fire."

CHAPTER XII.

HELL.

Why speak of hell to priests? Is it possible that a priest can be condemned to hell? A priest whose sacred obligation it is to keep others from falling into the abyss? A priest whose sacred character made him terrible to the devils? Can he become the hopeless slave of devils? Can it be possible that the tongue of the priest, consecrated by the blood of Christ, that tongue which so often proclaimed God's infinite mercy, that tongue which so often broke the chains of hell in the confessional, can that tongue be condemned to curse God for all eternity? Can it be possible that he who opened the gates of heaven to so many, should be himself forever excluded from heaven? The priest is the light of the world, and can he be condemned to eternal darkness?

Ah! this terrible truth is but too certain. Our Lord himself assures us that "the useless servant," he who has buried or wasted his talents, shall be "cast into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *That* God who is justice itself has pronounced the awful sentence: "Inutilem servum ejicite in tenebras exteriores; illic erit fletus et stridor dentium." (Matt. xxv, 30.) Judas was a priest, and our Lord himself assures us that "it were better for him if he had never been born." Our Lord assures us that "he was a devil."

As long as we are in this world, we are capable of sinning and even sinning mortally. The angels sinned in

heaven. Adam sinned in paradise. We are not angels, we are not in paradise. Neither the sacerdotal character nor the sacred functions of the priesthood render us impeccable.

The doctrine that we can *always* love and serve God in this life, without fear of hell, or desire for heaven, merely impelled by the pure love of God, is a doctrine condemned by the Church. We must never forget that we are now in a fallen state. We are poor, weak creatures, thoroughly infected by the poison of original sin. Our intellect is tempted to pride; our body is continually tempted to sensuality, so that we need to be continually reminded of the torments of hell, that we may always remain humble, chaste and temperate.

It is true that fear alone is not sufficient. Fear is indeed a gift of the Holy Ghost and prepares the sinner for conversion; but fear will not justify him unless united with at least the first dawn of love; and even he who is justified will not become perfect unless love be stronger in his heart than fear. All this is certain; yet, on the other hand, our love must be accompanied and sustained by a holy fear. There are times when our senses, allured by the charms of the world, need the scourge, need the wholesome fear of hell, to curb them and keep them from dragging the soul to perdition. This is especially the case when strong and sudden temptations assail us; when our soul is overwhelmed with dryness and sadness and darkness; when the love of God seems to us but an empty, mocking word; when even prayer itself has lost its charm and becomes distasteful to us. Then it is that the fear of a *certain eternal hell alone* can save us. The greatest saints have acknowledged that there were times in their

lives when the fear of hell alone preserved them from sin.

St. Teresa says: "I was one day in prayer. Suddenly I found myself plunged apparently in hell. The entrance to this place of suffering was long and narrow; very low, dark, and close. The floor seemed exceedingly foul; it sent forth pestilential vapors, and was covered with loathsome vermin. At the end was a hollow place in the wall like a closet, and there I found myself imprisoned. My sufferings there were intolerable. My very soul seemed on fire.

"I have, as physicians declare, undergone the most painful sufferings that can be endured in this life. I have suffered even the inflictions of Satan; yet all these are as nothing when compared with what I then felt. What still further increased my agony was the thought that these torments were to last forever.

"The most frightful pain of all was the anguish of my soul, a sense of oppression, of stifling, a pain so keen and so hopeless that I cannot possibly describe it. It was not merely that the soul is being continually torn from the body, it is the soul that is tearing itself to pieces. This inward fire or despair surpasses all pain, all torment.

"In this pestilential place I could neither sit nor lie down. I had not even the least hope of any comfort, I found myself, as it were, in a hole in the wall—these terrible walls hemmed me in on every side."

St. Teresa acknowledges that this sight of hell was one of the greatest graces that she ever received. From *that* moment the greatest trials seemed light to her. She lost all affection for everything that could lead her

to that dread abyss of woe; she had no longer any fear of the sufferings of this life. She thanked God continually for having preserved her from these unutterable torments.

“Yet,” says St. Ignatius of Loyola, “he who warms himself often at the fire of hell during life, will not fall into it after death.” St. Philip Neri used to say the same in other words: “Whoever,” he said, “often goes into hell in the course of his life, will keep out of it after death.” And with good reason, for there is no thought more powerful to assist us in overcoming the greatest temptations than that of the torments of hell. The greatest saints have often meditated on these torments. St. Augustine often preached on hell. Whilst speaking on this subject he trembled from head to foot and terrified his hearers more by his appearance than by his words. “You tremble, my brethren,” he said. “I, too, tremble, both for myself and for you. I have read our divine books; I have not read any passage in Holy Writ telling me not to fear.” St. Jerome retired into the depths of a vast wilderness. There his face was often bathed in tears. The desert re-echoed with his sobs and sighs. He often took a stone in his hand and struck his breast with it until he began to bleed. Why did he do all this? It was on account of his great fear of hell, as he himself acknowledges in his letter to Eustochium. *Ob gehennæ metum tali me carcere damnaveram.* (Ep. 18, or 21.)

St. Chrysostom had hell painted in glaring colors in the room in which he dwelt. At every glance and in every action he wished to call to mind the salutary thought of hell. St. Bernard, having meditated deeply on hell one day, made a resolution never to laugh again during

his life. From the depth of his solitude he cried out : " O hell ! O place of torments and fire ! The thought of thee fills my soul with horror." (Serm. de 5 region.)

St. Francis Borgia often meditated on hell. He was once asked why he appeared so unusually sad. " I have meditated on hell," was the reply, " and I feel as if the whole world looked on me as a monster of that dread abyss." St. Peter Damian tells us that his hair used to stand on end at the mere thought of an unhappy eternity.

St. Frances de Chantal used to tell her sisters in religion " that she would fear very much for the salvation of that one among them who should lose the fear of hell." If the saints, then, had so great a fear of hell, what fear ought we to have who may have been great sinners ?

Alas ! had not God revealed to us the existence of hell, few indeed, even of the priests, would keep the commandments, few indeed would be saved.

If even the saints stand in need of the fear of hell in order to remain faithful in the service of God, how much more are not we in need of this fear—we who resemble the saints so little ? Hence it is that God has so clearly revealed the existence of eternal punishment in hell, and the holy infallible Church, the very " pillar and foundation of truth," teaches that no one can be saved unless he believes this great truth.

That there is a hell. The very demons themselves bear witness to the existence of hell. They begged our Lord not to send them to the abyss. These proud spirits begged him to permit them even to enter the swine.

As soon as the soul quits the body, it enters the realm of spirits ; its will becomes forever fixed and unalterable. There is no more room for repentance. " Wherever the tree falleth, there it shall lie," says our Lord himself.

Look upon the cross. Behold the wounds of Jesus. Ah! the cross, the blood, the wounds of Jesus preach most eloquently the dread reality of these never-ending torments. An eternal God suffers; an eternal God dies; and why? God always acts reasonably. Why should an eternal God suffer, if not to save us from eternal death?

The infidel asks: "How can a merciful God permit his creatures to suffer for all eternity?" God is indeed merciful, infinitely merciful! But what does it mean to be merciful? When does a judge or governor show his mercy? Is it not when he saves one from misery, from suffering? And when does God show his infinite mercy? It is precisely by saving us from infinite, from eternal misery, from eternal suffering. The infidel, then, in acknowledging the infinite mercy of God, necessarily acknowledges the existence of hell, the existence of endless suffering.

Our Lord himself assures us that there is a hell. He tells it to us in the plainest language; he tells it to us at least fifteen times in the holy Gospels. He tells of the damned that "their worm shall never die and their fire shall never quench." He tells that in hell the damned shall be "salted with fire." This is the horrible expression he uses. As salt penetrates and preserves the food in which it is placed, so does the fire of hell preserve the damned, while it penetrates into every particle of their being. He says of Judas: "It were better for that man that he had never been born."

Now ponder calmly who it is that speaks thus. It is Jesus Christ, the God of mercy and compassion—the same Jesus who assures us that he came "not to judge

the world, but to save the world." It is the same Jesus who, without a word of reproach, received to his heart the penitent Magdalen, who pardoned the adulteress, who promised paradise to the robber on the cross. It is this same Jesus who assures us that there is a hell and that its torments shall never end.

Let us go in spirit to the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. We shall all appear there in reality on the last day. There Jesus is seated on the throne of justice. He is a just judge. He rewards every one according to his works. Now even an earthly judge is not allowed to exaggerate his sentence. If he intends, for instance, to condemn a criminal to prison for three years, he will not say, I condemn you forever. Now Jesus Christ is a just judge, he is Justice itself. Time has passed away. Eternity has begun, and in eternity, the eternal judge pronounces an eternal sentence. Ah ! ponder on it, "Depart from me," he will say, "Depart accursed, into the everlasting flames of hell !" "In ignem æternum."

Now, no one has more cause to fear hell than the priest.

I. Because no one is in grater danger of going there than he, and II. Because there is nothing more frightful than the hell of the bad priest.

1. *Priests are in great danger of falling into hell on account of the temptations to which they are exposed.* The hermit escapes the temptations of the world by flight. The priest, however, has to stay in the world, and fight against its seductions. O what great vigilance, what continual self-denial must he practise, in order to preserve the truth amid so many errors, to keep his heart pure in so universal a corruption ! The healthiest man rarely

escapes the malignant effects of a poisoned atmosphere. Can, then, the priest dwell in the poisoned atmosphere of the world without experiencing its baneful effects ! Assuredly he cannot, unless he is a man of God, a man of prayer and self-sacrifice.

2. *Again, priests are in great danger of falling into hell on account of the subtle temptations of the devil.* Satan attacks priests more furiously and more perseveringly than others. In order to ruin the flock the devil wages war against its pastor: *Antiquus hostis caput potius quam membra, duces exercitus potius quam militum turmam, et pastores libentius quam ovium greges oppugnare conatur.* (St. Laur. Inst., Regim. Præl. c. vi, n. 1.) We read in the lives of the Fathers of the desert that the devil watched a certain priest for forty years and at last succeeded in making him fall into sin. Satan knows that to overcome a priest is a conquest so great that it cannot be bought at too high a price. Did he not ask our Lord to permit him to sift the apostles like wheat ? *Ecce Satanas expetivit vos ut cribraret sicut triticum.* (Luke xxii, 31.)

3. *Priests are in great danger of going to hell on account of the temptations to which they are exposed in the exercise of their sacred ministry.* The sacerdotal functions require in the priest a purity which rivals with that of the angels. He must be at all times fit to celebrate the divine mysteries and to administer the sacraments. He must understand how to unite virtues that often seem incompatible. He must unite the esteem of his sublime dignity with profound humility, ardent zeal with discretion, meekness with firmness and so on. The necessary intercourse with the good and the wicked, the care of

the sick, the obligation of hearing confessions, all these place him daily in a position in which it is very easy to take a false step and be lost forever.

4. *Priests are in great danger of going to hell on account of their own sins.* One single mortal sin is sufficient to drag one to hell; and there is, as we know from experience, so much weakness in man, even in the strongest! The inclinations to evil are sometimes so strong, so overpowering even in him who seems to have gained a full control over all his passions! And what should increase our fear of hell is the fact that faults which, in a lay-person, are but venial sins, are often grievous crimes in the priest, and this on account of his divine character, of his supernatural lights, or on account of the scandal which he gives. “*Levia etiam delicta, quæ in ipsis gravia essent,*” says the Council of Trent. (Sess. 22. De Reform. C. I.)

5. *Finally, priests are in danger of going to hell on account of the sins of others.* The priest has to answer before God, not only for his own sins, but also for the sins of those confided to his care. If they lead sinful lives and the priest does not try to correct them, or, if they live in ignorance of their religion and the priest neglects to instruct them, he will be damned with them in spite of the many virtues with which he may be adorned.

Sacerdotes pro populorum iniquitate damnantur, si eos aut ignorantes non erudiant, aut peccantes non arguant. (S. Isid. Hispal. l. 3. Sentent. C. 46.)

It is for these five reasons that St. Chrysostom uttered these terrifying words: *Non temere dico, sed ut affectus sum et sentio; non arbitror inter sacerdotes multos esse qui salvi fiant; sed multi plures, qui pereant, non tam*

propriis peccatis, quam alienis, quæ non curaverunt. (Hom. 3. in Act. Apost.)

II. *The unworthy priest suffers in hell more than other reprobates :*

1. Because he has *more knowledge* than the ordinary Christian.

Job calls the prison of hell a place of darkness, where no order but everlasting horror dwells. “ God punishes disorders with order, follies with wisdom, sin with sanctity, injustice with equity,” says St. Gregory. The sun, in striking several persons with the same rays, makes different impressions on them, because they feel its heat according to the disposition in which it finds them. So the same fire torments the damned, but not with equal violence ; they are more or less punished according to the greater or less gravity of their crimes.

Now, the sins of the reprobate priest are greater than those of others because he sinned with greater knowledge. He therefore sins with more malice, and consequently his torments in hell will be proportioned to the knowledge he had of sin. “ The servant who knew his master’s will,” says our Lord, “ and who did not act accordingly, shall be beaten with many stripes.” (Luke xii, 47.)

Did he not know the will of his divine Master ? he whose duty it was to announce it to others. On this account St. Chrysostom says that a priest shall be more severely punished than a layman, even though he commit only the same sin as the layman. “ Propterea sacerdos eadem, cum subditis peccata committens, non eadem, sed multa graviora patietur.” (Hom. 77. ad Pop Antioch.)

2. *The unworthy priest shall suffer more torment in*

hell than the ordinary Christian, because he received more graces.

“Omni enim,” says our Lord, “cui multum datum est, multum requiretur ab eo.” (Luke xii.) Did the unworthy priest not receive much? he to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven were confided, and to whom God gave himself every day. He therefore will be tormented in hell in proportion to the graces he has abused.

3. The unworthy priest shall suffer more torment in hell than others on account of the *sublime dignity* to which God elevated him.

Was he not placed high in rank and dignity? he whom the angels revered. Was he not mighty? he who opened the gates of heaven; he who had the power to close the gates of hell; he to whom the King of kings was submissive. The Church conferred on him so high a dignity. And how did he repay his holy Mother? Is it not just that he should suffer more than others—he who became the minister of the sacraments only to profane them—he who became the shepherd of souls only to ruin them—he who became the spiritual father of her children only to inflict spiritual death on them! Most assuredly! for God will render to every one according to his works. (Matt. xvi, 27.)

Judicium durissimum his qui præsumunt, fiet. Potentes potenter tormenta patientur.” (Sap. vi, 6, 7.) Should not he be punished more severely—he whose duty it was to announce the sacred truths of religion, to guard its morals, to observe its ceremonies, but who did not lead the life of even a good Christian? Is it not just that he who dishonored the holy Spouse of Christ, should him-

self be dishonored? “*Tantus ad sacerdotis pœnam cumulus accedet,*” says St. Isidore of Pelusium, “*quantus in eum prius honor collatus est.*” (Lib. 2. Ep. 37.)

The lost priest in hell shall suffer greater torments in all his senses than other reprobates; he shall be more cruelly trampled under the feet of the demons; he shall be delivered up to the devouring activity of a cruel fire especially created to punish the damned—a fire that tortures with especial rigor the reprobate priest.

However, the greatest torment of the reprobate priest is not the evil which he suffers, but the privation of the good which he has lost—a heaven so beautiful, a God who at the very moment of damnation showed himself to him in his ravishing beauty, and the infinite happiness which he might so easily have acquired.

God has made us all for happiness. This yearning for happiness is so deeply implanted in our nature that it can never be destroyed—no! not even in hell! We can destroy our health, we can destroy our reason, we can pluck the eyes from our head, we can destroy our bodily life, we can destroy even the life of grace in our soul; but *one* thing we can never do—we can never pluck from our heart this thirst—this wild, unquenchable yearning for happiness. Impelled by this desire and blinded by passion, men seek for happiness where it is not to be found. One seeks for happiness in riches, another in gratifying his ambition, another in shameful pleasures, another in the pursuit of earthly knowledge, and so on. These false images of happiness deceive so many in life. At the icy touch of death, all these fleeting phantoms disappear, and God stands unveiled before the soul in all his ravishing beauty. Ah! then it is that

the soul rushes towards God with all the wild impetuosity of an immortal, intelligent spirit !

If you have ever stood upon the banks of the Niagara and gazed upon the rapids, you must have noticed how the maddened waters hurry on past rocks and trees, roaring and foaming and bounding, till at last they plunge headlong in the yawning abyss ! Such is at least a faint image of the wild impetuosity with which the soul rushes towards God, the source of all her happiness. Ha ! were you to place before the soul now all the riches, all the honors, all the pleasures of this world, it would spurn them all—the soul would curse them all !

The lost soul yearns for God alone. The soul can be happy only in God. But, ah ! horrid thought ! The soul is hurled back from God. It is tied down by the chains of hell. It is dragged down by the heavy weight of its sins !

See that famished tiger chained to a rock. It leaps, it howls, it tries to reach the food that is placed before it. But in vain ! It cannot break its fetters. It is hurled back against the rock. It falls exhausted. Again it is urged on by the gnawing pangs of hunger. It plunges, it roars, it foams with mad fury. Again it is hurled back by its chain—again it falls down exhausted !

The famished tiger will die at last ; but the famished soul can never die ! O God ! O God ! the lost soul can never die ! Ah, no ! The lost soul hungers ever for God, but it is ever cast off from God. God curses the lost soul with a father's, a mother's, a Creator's, a Redeemer's curse ! “Depart from me, accursed, into everlasting fire !”

Ah ! how just are the judgments of God ! During

life God invited that sinner so often ! God wished to dwell in his heart. “ My delight,” he says, “ is to be with the children of men.” Our Lord compares himself to a beggar standing at the door of that sinner’s heart the livelong wintry day. “ Behold,” he says, “ I stand at the door and knock.” O how many long years has Jesus stood there, praying, pleading and knocking ! But that sinner *would not* ! He hardened his heart. He stifled the voice of his conscience. O how often did God urge him to give up sin and return like the prodigal. God promised to receive him with open arms, to give him the kiss of peace ! God wished to fold him under his wings, as the hen gathereth her little ones—and he would not !

Ah ! now all this is changed. God’s terrible threat is at last fulfilled upon the sinner. “ You shall seek me and you shall not find me !” Ah ! then it is that the lost soul, seeing that it cannot enjoy God, is filled with deadly hatred. Then it is that the soul curses God and all those who caused it to lose God. Then it is that in its mad fury it curses itself for having lost God.

The lost soul curses the Mother of God, whose mercy it has despised ; it curses the precious Blood of Jesus, that was shed for it on the cross—that sacred Blood that so often cleansed and nourished the soul in the sacraments. The soul curses God the Father who created it. It curses God the Son who redeemed it ; it curses God the Holy Ghost who sanctified it in holy baptism. The lost soul wishes to destroy God, but feels that it is powerless. The soul curses God, but it knows that God is loved and adored by myriads of happy beings who enjoy that heaven which it has lost.

There is a bird in South America with a cry so melancholy that the people call it "The lost soul." But what is even this dismal cry, to the melancholy wail of a soul that is lost forever?

All the wild and melancholy sounds in nature are but feeble utterances of that never-ending woe which no tongue can tell.

There is something unutterably sad in the voice of the storm as it howls through the leafless forests of autumn. There is something almost unearthly in the wail of the storm at sea—in the sobbing and moaning and shrieking of the wind on a dark winter's night. Ah, what ails the sea? Why does it toss so fretfully? What ails the wind that it sobs and shrieks like a lost spirit? Ah! they are speaking for the dead. These strange, mysterious utterances are feeble voices of that woe which is unutterable, that woe which shall never, never end!

There are weird stories of men passing through grave-yards on a dark stormy night, and hearing dismal sounds as of a restless soul complaining in its torments. You say it is only the wind. Well, be it so. May not the wind be speaking for the dead, speaking dread warning to the living? Does not all nature sympathize with man? Does not St. Paul assure us that "every creature groans and travails" for our redemption? Ah, yes! all the wild and melancholy sounds in nature are but feeble utterances of that woe which is unutterable. Let us descend in spirit to hell and listen to the wail of the reprobate priest.

O heaven! O paradise of delights! O sweet abode of the blessed! I believed in thee; I encouraged others to live for thee, to suffer any kind of loss rather than lose

heaven, and I myself have lost my God and my all! I am in hell, I believed in hell. I threatened sinners with its torments. I told others by what means they must try to escape hell. God, reason, faith and conscience—all pressed me to use the proper means to escape hell. A God died to save me, and yet I am in hell. He gave himself to me every day at Mass; he offered me his graces, his merits, his mercies, and yet I am in hell? I am in hell through my own fault! Ah! would to God I had once more one of those hours which I spent so foolishly! Alas! they shall never, never return!

Shall I never be able to keep my mind from thinking of what I am, and what I might have been! To be separated from God forever, I who carried him in my hands, in my heart! To be a priest forever and yet to be damned forever! O excruciating forever! O eternal hell! *Vermis eorum non moritur.* (Mark ix, 43.) But this is not all that the reprobate priest has to endure in hell.

The lost priest is cursed in hell by its victims. O accursed traitor, they shriek, accursed by thy fellow priests whom thou hast dishonored; accursed by the people whom thou hast led astray!

May the mother that bore thee curse the day that brought thee forth. May the bishop that consecrated thee curse the day on which he placed his hand on thy sacrilegious brow. Thou shalt be accursed forever, for thou hast betrayed thy mother the holy Church, who formed thee so carefully, so tenderly that thou mightest become a priest according to her own heart. Thou hast turned against thy mother all the gifts and powers she has bestowed upon thee.

Accursed be thou, wicked *Ostiarium* ! Thou hast opened the doors to the enemy. Accursed be thou, wicked *Lector* ! Thou hast made a lie and a snare of the Holy Scriptures.

Accursed be thou, wicked Exorist ! Instead of expelling Beelzebub thou hast invoked him. Accursed be thou, wicked Acolyte ! Thou hast borne the torch before Satan.

Accursed be thou, wicked priest, profaner of the sacred altar ! Better were it for thee that thou hadst never been born. May God count all thy steps in the path of evil, and may they be never forgotten. May he heap upon thy head the infection of all the sins thou hast caused others to commit.

May all the blessings thou hast received and rendered void rain upon thee as fiery maledictions. May they fall upon thee and torture thee like a sacrament of Satan.

May the sacred unction burn thy sacrilegious hands. May it burn those hands defiled by avarice and lust ! May the sacred unction burn thy brow which should shine with the lustre of grace and innocence, but which was the hold of unclean and infidel thoughts and desires. May the snow-white alb which thou has defiled consume thee like a garment of flames.

May the sacred stole which thou hast dishonored hang round thy neck like a mill-stone and sink thee deeper in the fiery gulf of hell !

Be thou accursed forever to suffer, with never a ray of hope ; forever to burn and never to be refreshed ; forever to hunger and thirst, and never to be appeased ; forever to rave with impotent fury, and never to be pitied ; forever to despair, and never to be comforted ! May

the weight of all these torments of an endless eternity press upon thee like a huge mountain.

Ah, let us carefully avoid anything that could lead us to hell. Let us hate a lukewarm and sensual life. Let us have recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us kneel at the foot of the altar, where we offer the victim of salvation. O, my Lord, if we are to burn in fire, let it be in the fire of thy love, and not in the fire of thy wrath. Deliver me from hell by means of hell itself. Such a miracle is worthy of thy mercy. If thou refusest me the tears of a true sorrow, what hope can I have that I shall be one day filled with the torrents of celestial delights and consolations which thou hast promised to those that weep! Ah, my Lord, let me weep, let me suffer in this life. Punish me here below, but deliver me from all danger of being lost forever: *Hic ure, hic seca . . . , modo in æternum parcas.* (St. August.) Henceforth I will endeavor to snatch from hell as many souls as I can. I will never cease praising thy goodness for having spared me until now. *Misericordiæ Domini, qui non sumus consumpti.* (Thren. iii, 22.)

CHAPTER XIII.

THE REPENTANT PRIEST.

A certain nobleman, who lived at the court of Charles V., resolved to quit the world and enter a monastery. The emperor asked him why he had taken so strange a resolution. "Ah, sire," answered the nobleman, "is it not just and reasonable that at least some years of penance should intervene between a disorderly life and the dread hour of death?"

Every priest is a nobleman ; in fact, the most noble of all men. His nobility is derived from God. Every priest, therefore, who has had the misfortune to fall into sin, should say to himself: "Is it not just and reasonable that at least some years of penance should intervene between a disorderly life and the dread hour of death?" Indeed, "unless you do penance, you shall perish." (Luke xiii, 3.)

The sin of a priest is very much like that of St. Peter in *its causes, its circumstances, and its grievousness*. His penance, therefore, should also be like that of St. Peter.

1. The sin of a priest is very much like that of Peter in *its causes*.

There are three great rocks on which the virtue of priests, even the most fervent, is often wrecked. These rocks are presumption, negligence and imprudence. Presumption was the first cause of the fall of St. Peter. The spirit of God, without which the strongest man is but weakness, is pleased only with an humble heart. The

heart of Peter was not sufficiently humble before his fall. He knew not how to distrust himself. His divine Master declared to him that he was not able to follow him then, but he should be able soon after. "And why," asked Peter "can I not now? I am willing to give my life for thee." *Non potes me modo sequi.* (John xiii, 36.) "Quare non possum te sequi modo? Animam meam pro te ponam." (John xiii, 37.) The Saviour predicted to the apostles that he would very soon be to them a subject of scandal. "*Omes vos scandalizabimini in me in ista nocte.*" (Mat. xxvi, 37.) "Thou mayest be to all the others," answered Peter, "but thou wilt not be to me." *Etsi omnes scandalizati fuerint, ego non scandalizabor.* To confound this blind self-confidence, Jesus predicted the fall of the prince of the apostles in terms of the most startling precision. "*Amen dico tibi, quia tu hodie in nocte hac, priusquam gallus vocem his dederit, tu es me negaturus.*" (Mark xiv, 30.) The unhappy Apostle dared again to insist, and even more strongly. (*At ille amplius loquebatur.*) He did not fear to give a formal lie to his God. "*Etsi oportuerit me simul commori tibi, non te negabo.*" Ah! fatal presumption! How many tears hast thou caused to the Church! How many times hast thou overthrown those who appeared the most immovable. Ah! how little ought we to depend on ourselves, on our own courage, on the horror we think we have of sin! Presumption blinds us in regard to our own weakness, the strength of the enemy, and the greatness of the danger that threatens us. Regardless of our natural weakness, we ask: "*Quare non possum?*" Why cannot I go there? I am sure of myself: I will not yield to any temptation.

The devil laughs at all our resolutions if we do not earnestly avoid the occasion of sin. As to the strength of the enemy, the sad but instructive example of St. Peter teaches us that the object of temptations is sometimes much more powerful than it appears. Its very weakness often is its real strength.

As to the greatness of the danger. . . . who would have dared say to the Apostle that he would find the danger of apostasy in a temptation so contemptible? Who would have said to those leaders in Israel, the support and the guides of souls, that in laboring to save their brethren from shipwreck, they would perish themselves and give sad examples of the most shameful weakness?

Another cause of St. Peter's fall was his negligence. He who believes himself strong, seeks no support for his weakness. Arrived at the garden of Olives, Jesus said to his apostles: "Remain here while I go and pray, and pray yourselves that you may not fall into temptation." (Luke xxii, 40.) After the alarming prediction made to Peter, how could he neglect so grave a recommendation. He neglected it, however, and instead of praying he slept. Ah! how he must have blushed at the gentle reproach that his master made him! "You sleep, Simon, you who pretend to be able to follow me to prison and to death! and you have not been able to watch even one hour with me! Watch and pray."

Prayer is the great means given us to obtain the necessary strength to overcome every temptation. If a priest, even after a long life of fervor, is not firmly convinced of his extreme weakness; if he neglects to arm himself with the holy weapon of prayer; if he abandons meditation, or if he makes it carelessly, he will soon become a scandal to the Church,

Jesus was taken prisoner, and Peter, after so many promises, was satisfied with following from afar. "*Petrus vero sequebatur a longe.*" From prayer omitted or badly made, he soon passed to lukewarmness and coldness. If a priest neglects to warm his soul at the fire of holy meditation, he soon loses that energy which is necessary for the accomplishment of his duties. His heart is no longer dilated with the unction that is drawn from communion with the Lord. Instead of running as he did in the way of the commandments and the evangelical counsels, he begins to grow languid. He loses the taste of heavenly things, the love of his sacred functions, his zeal in the ministry, he gradually falls into dissipation, into a life which is altogether natural and sensual. Oh! how soon does he find himself far from Jesus, his guide and his model! "*Sequebatur a longe.*" Would to God Peter had committed no other crime, had made no other wound in the heart of Jesus! But it is so difficult to stop in the way of iniquity; and how rapid is the progress of the sinner! Though Peter followed from afar, yet he followed; though he walked slowly, yet he walked. . . . But now he walks no longer. "*Petrus vero. . . .sedebat.*" Jesus is standing; he is exposed to the insults and jeers of the servants. Peter hears the blasphemies and blows of that vile rabble. "*Prophetiza nobis, Christe, quis est qui te percussit;*" and Peter is tranquilly seated. "*Sedebat cum ministris ad ignem, et calefaciebat se.*" (Mark xiv, 15.) Behold the priest enfeebled, enervated by successive infidelities and ready to fall into every crime. One more step, and he falls into the abyss!

The third cause of Peter's fall was his imprudence. In a state of weakness and moral exhaustion, when a

breath might overthrow him, he exposed himself to occasions so dangerous that they might overcome even the virtue of the strongest. What is he doing in that crowd? The prince of the apostles, in an assembly of wicked people, among the servants of a sacrilegious pontiff, a wretch who had the hardihood to insult and condemn Jesus.

There is no security in associating with the wicked unless we are continually on our guard. The world always combats us with advantage, if we attack it without precaution. Let a priest go into worldly society from other motives than those of zeal and charity; let him go there for amusement or pastime; let him go to beg of creatures some poor human consolation, as he can no longer find any consolation in his own unmortified heart; let him imagine that there is no danger for him: he will soon learn from bitter experience that the danger is even far greater than it has been represented.

2. *The sin of a priest is very much like that of Peter in its circumstances.*

Peter fell, notwithstanding his public profession of faith, notwithstanding his sincere protestations of unalterable devotion.

Our Saviour having asked his apostles, "Quem dicunt homines esse Filium hominis?" they repeated what the people had said of him. "At isti dixerunt: Alii Joannem Baptistam, alii autem Eliam, alii vero Jeremiam, aut unum ex prophetis." "But whom do you say that I am?" Immediately Peter replied: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This profession of faith merited the congratulation of his divine Master: "Beatus es, Simon Barjona," and the most glorious privileges. "Et ego dico

tibi, quia tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam. . . et tibi dabo claves regni cœlorum !
(Matt. xvi.)

On another occasion, when Jesus saw himself abandoned by several of his disciples, he asked the others if they too were going to leave him ? “ Numquid et vos vultis abire ? ” “ Leave thee,” said Peter, with his accustomed ardor ; “ whither shall we go ? ” Where shall we find all that we would lose in leaving Thee ? Thou hast the words of eternal life ! It is thou that teachest the science of salvation. We believe, and know, that thou art Christ, the Son of God. “ Et nos credidimus et cognovimus, quia tu es Christus, Filius Dei.” (John vi, 70.)

On every occasion Peter shows the same attachment to his divine Saviour, the same determination to remain faithful to him in every trial.

And you, sacerdos Christi, before abandoning him, have you not often promised that you would serve him even to your last breath ? Have you not acknowledged, proclaimed and taught that to him alone is due the homage of every heart ? When you renounced the world to embrace the ecclesiastical state, did you not by that act declare publicly : “ The world knows thee not, O Lord, neither does it adore thee. But thou art the Son of the living God. Thou hast the words of eternal life. Thou art the portion of my inheritance.—Dominus pars hæreditatis meæ.”

Peter fell, notwithstanding all the light, all the warnings and all the favors which Jesus Christ had bestowed upon him. He had heard Christ's public discourses and his private conversations. He had even heard the eternal Father on Mount Tabor proclaim the Divinity of his Son,

heard him recommend his divine Son to the love and reverence of his disciples. "Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite." (Matt. xvii, 5.) These words, in fact, made so deep an impression on Peter that he fell prostrate to the ground. A few moments before his fall, Jesus said to him: "Watch, O Peter, watch and pray; the spirit is prompt, but the flesh is weak." Could Peter so soon have forgotten the touching proofs of affection which his divine Master had shown to him? His lips were yet moist with the divine Blood which he had drunk, for the first time, at the Eucharistic banquet! . . . And you, O priest, are you less favored than Peter? You, too, like Peter, have been warned; and warned repeatedly. How many times and in how many ways have you been told, that you will be enticed farther than you wish, and that in loving the danger, you shall perish therein?

Peter fell, notwithstanding the apparent insignificance of the temptation. At the question of a servant, "Are not you also a disciple of this man?" he trembles. Who would believe that so slight a wave could shake "the rock?" Alas! that tiny wave was enough. Peter was troubled; the rock trembled and fell. "No," said he, "I know not what you say, I know him not!" He publicly denied Jesus. "Negavit coram omnibus." A coward has courage only to defend his baseness. Ah! were we to see Peter turn pale at the sword which is drawn to give him the death-blow, we might suppose that the greatness of the peril had troubled his reason, and in condemning him we should also pity him. But no; a servant speaks, and Peter is overcome! That great apostle who considered himself unconquerable, that wall of brass, fell at the

word of a weak servant! “Ecce ad unius auræ flatum columna firmissima tota contremuit.” (St. August. Tract 113 in Joan.) O frightful weakness! My God! who shall support my natural weakness? Thou alone, Lord; Thou art all my strength. If thou ceaseest one instant to sustain me, I am lost; I shall fall into the deepest abyss.

3. *The sin of the priest is very much like that of Peter in its grievousness.*

If Peter had sinned only once, we might think that it happened by surprise; but he fell even three times. After the first experience of his weakness, he retired into the vestibule, and presently the cock crew. “Exiit foras ante atrium, et gallus cantavit.” (Mark xiv, 68.) Did the crowing of the cock startle him? Did it perhaps remind him of the prediction of Jesus Christ? After having left the occasion, he returned. Is it then surprising that he fell again?

The second fall was more profound than the first. He not only declared that he knew not the man, but he even took an oath that he knew him not. “Iterum negavit cum juramento, quia non novi hominem.” (Matt. xxvi, 72.)

The third time he added horrible imprecations to his perjury. “Cœpit detestari et jurare.” (Matt. xxvi, 74.) Cœpit anathematizare. (Mark xiv, 71.)

At the first fall, conscience is filled with fear, at the second fall it fears less; at the third, it is bold and hardened; fears nothing—sad effect of repeated falls!

And when did Peter become guilty of perjury and apostasy? It was at the very time when Jesus was insulted, abused, and buffeted by the rabble; at the very time when Jesus stood so much in need of the consolations of

a friend. Yet at that very time Peter said : "I am not his disciple ; I have nothing to do with him ; I do not even know the man." "Nescio hominem istum quem dicitis." (Mark xiv, 71.) Oh ! words of dishonor and sacrilege ! How can Peter utter them ? Must not his lips tremble, his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth and his heart break with shame and remorse ? How can he speak with such contempt of Jesus ? Can he be ignorant of the sad effect of his scandalous defection ? The people were attached to the Son of God, as he had often witnessed. But what can they think of Jesus now when they see all his apostles abandon him ? What must they think of Peter when they see him basely deny Jesus, and deny him, too, at the mere word of a servant ? As the idolatry of Aaron was a great scandal to the Jews, so the denial of Peter was a great scandal to the Jewish people as well as to the disciples. Was anything more needed to shake their faith ? Was it not putting a terrible weapon into the hands of the enemies of the Saviour ? Alas ! how much scandal is given by the bad example of an unworthy priest !

4. *As the sin of a priest is very much like that of Peter, so his penance also should resemble that of Peter. Peter weeps over his sins ; he repents and does penance for them.*

A. One single look cast upon Peter by the Son of God, was sufficient to convert him. Repeated warnings, the kindest words, even miracles could not convert Judas. Strange and terrible truth ! Peter repents and is saved. A single look of Jesus suffices to convert him, and Judas dies impenitent and condemned, after having received from his divine Master the most singular favors ! Is it, then, man who distinguisheth ? (1 Cor. iv, 7.)

No ; but it is man who of his own free will rejects the gift of God, or corresponds with that gift with the help of God. Peter is prompt and faithful in accepting the grace which is offered him. No sooner had that heavenly light beamed on his soul from the eye of Jesus than Peter awoke as from a profound sleep. "Recordatus est Petrus. . ." Great God ! What have I said ? What have I done ? I said that I knew not my divine Master ! And I have repeated this and even sworn to it ! And what time have I chosen to grieve and offend him ? O perjury ! O baseness ! O monstrous ingratitude ! O fatal prediction of my divine Master ! Thou hast indeed been verified ! I have denied Jesus ! I who had promised to follow him even unto death ! In the light which penetrates his soul, Peter sees all the sins which he has committed—incredulity, presumption, negligence, impiety, cruelty and scandal—"Recordatus est Petrus." But of what is he thinking ? Ah ! If like Judas, he had thought only of his sin, like Judas too he would have despaired. But Peter remembers, "*verbi Domini*;" he remembers all that the Lord had said to console and encourage the penitent—so many parables, the touching expressions of his inexhaustible mercy. He remembers that he heard Jesus declare that he had come to save sinners, and that a sinner should receive pardon as often as he repented sincerely. But above all, Peter remembers his Master's words of warning. Oh ! how many touching memories were evoked by that one tender look, that look which came from the inmost heart of Jesus ! It was more than Peter could bear. His heart was broken ; his soul was melted, and he burst into tears ! He spoke not, but he wept. The tears that he shed were, at the

same time, his exterior confession and the certain proof of his deep interior sorrow. "Ah, happy tears! they were for the faithless Apostle a new baptism which remitted and effaced his sin." (St. Leo. Serm. 9. De Pass.)

B. Peter renounces his sin by withdrawing from the dangerous occasion.

No sooner had he entered into himself than he instantly quitted the society in which he had fallen. He remembered that his first fall was followed by a second and a third, because he had returned to the occasion of sin after having quitted it. Now he distrusts himself; his presumption has cost him dear; his past temerity renders him prudent. He goes away. "Egressus foras." What! would he not have acted more nobly, if he had at once declared himself openly for Jesus Christ; if he had proclaimed his divinity in the very place where he had denied him? Perhaps so; but in so doing he would have shown less humility.

But should not the witnesses of his sin also witness his repentance? Assuredly! and they will witness it very soon. In the meantime, Peter teaches us that the first duty of those who have scandalized their brethren is to fly from the occasion of sin. Under pretence of repairing the scandal that has been given and reforming others, they must beware of exposing themselves to certain relapse. "Egressus foras." Why do so many fall again in spite of the strongest resolutions? It is because they have not imitated St. Peter in his repentance. They imagine that their heart is changed because it is touched. They are satisfied with weeping when they are bound to fly from the occasion of sin. They should say with Peter: Such a one has been a

stumbling block to me ; such society has been dangerous ; I must, therefore, fly from them. It was in the house of Caiphas that I denied my Saviour. I will never put my foot there again.

C. Peter repairs the evil he has done.

We have already seen how Peter's presumption was followed by an humble distrust of himself. We see in him, henceforth, the most saintly humility united with the most intrepid courage.

After his resurrection, our Saviour asked Peter if he loved him more than the others ; as if he had said : Simon, son of Jonas, do you think still that you love me more than your brethren do ? Do you believe still that you are more firm in your devotion, more faithful in following me than they are ? But Peter answered no longer in that boastful tone in which he had spoken before his fall. He replied with modesty and humility : “ Domine, tu scis quia amo te.” (John xxi. 15.) Far from believing that he surpassed the others in love for Jesus, he dared not even say that he loved him truly. He is grieved and confounded, because his Master asked him three times the same question. “ Contristatus est Petrus.” He fears that his love is not sincere and he humbly says : “ Lord, it seems to me that I love thee, but I fear to trust my feelings any longer. If I do not love thee, O Lord, then give me the love thou requirest of me.”

Such is the language of the true penitent. He knows his weakness from sad experience ; he places his confidence in God alone. But Peter has other wrongs to repair—his baseness, his scandal, the pain he has caused to the Heart of his divine Master. Peter sinned in the house of Caiphas ; he sinned publicly ; he sinned through

base cowardice. Peter repairs this scandal. On the day of Pentecost he stands in the midst of a vast multitude, and proclaims aloud the divinity of Jesus. "*Stans Petrus levavit vocem suam.*" (Acts ii, 14.)

He fears neither prison, nor torments, nor death. He upbraids not only the people, but also the doctors of the law and the princes of the priests for their impiety, for committing the horrible crime of deicide. "*Sanctum et justum negastis . . . auctorem vero vitæ interfecistis.*" (Acts iii. 14.)

O prodigy of grace ! What joy to hear the same lips which had shamefully denied Jesus, utter these fiery words which crushed the hearts of his hearers ! "*Compuncti sunt corde,*" and force them to strike their breasts and exclaim : "*Quid faciemus, viri fratres ?*" Peter is indeed converted. His humility and zeal prove that his conversion is thorough. With the tears of repentance he unites the labors of the apostolate. He wishes for a thousand lives that he may sacrifice all for his good Master. And finally, he proved that his repentance was sincere and lasting, by dying like his Master on the cross.

May we not say that such reparation is honorable to God, consoling to the Church, and useful to the repentant sinner ? O Lord ! thou alone canst draw good out of evil ; thou alone canst make my sins the motives and the means to raise me to a higher degree of virtue. Thou givest me the hope of becoming a great saint, precisely because I have been a great sinner ; Thou dost enkindle in my heart with the sweet tears of repentance, the sacred fire of divine love and zeal for the salvation of souls.

5. *The lessons to be drawn from Peter's fall and conversion.*

We find in the holy Gospel two examples which are widely different. We see two priests, two great apostles, two great sinners. One of them betrays his divine Master; the other publicly denies him.

But while Peter, hoping in the infinite mercy of God, seeks pardon in the Heart of Jesus which he has so cruelly wounded, Judas inflicts on that sacred Heart a new wound, far deeper than the first, by doubting of his Master's goodness and mercy. From the despair of Judas we learn that no one is so near to despair as the guilty priest. From the repentance of Peter, on the other hand, we see that no one is nearer to pardon than the repentant priest.

Which of the two shall I take for my model? I abhor the despair of Judas; I will imitate Peter in his confidence in God's mercy. Oh, Jesus! cast on me the look which changed the heart of thine Apostle. "Si despicias, pereo, si respicis, vivo." (St. Augustine, Med. c. 40.)

Interpreters tell us that our Lord permitted the fall of his Apostle and also pardoned him instantly as soon as he repented, in order to inspire sinners with confidence in God, however great their sins may be, and also to teach his ministers to be kind and compassionate towards those who have gone astray, no matter what crimes they may have committed.

The parable of the Prodigal, received by his father with so much joy, admirably renews and confirms the promise which God made of old to the repentant sinner. The sins of the impious shall not harm him on what day soever he is converted from his wicked ways. "Impie-

tas impii non nocebit ei in quâcunque die conversus fuerit." (Ezech. xxxiii, 12.) The mercy shown to the Prodigal, however, may appear to give but little encouragement to the fallen priest. The Prodigal was not a priest; he had not sinned in the sanctuary of the Lord; he had not committed the awful crime of sacrilege. St. Peter, however, is a priest, an apostle; he falls; and yet, see how quickly he rises again. The sin of Peter is enormous; he is guilty of scandal and ingratitude; and yet Jesus pardons him the moment he repents. Peter teaches us the consoling truth that all who have had the misfortune to fall like him, can also rise again like him by true repentance. He teaches us the consoling truth that there is no sin, however great and heinous, but can be effaced by the tears of true contrition.

One day St. Leonard of Port Maurice preached on confession. After the sermon a certain man came to him and said: "Father, I listened to your sermon. You showed so much compassion for poor sinners that I have taken the courage to come and tell you my troubles." The poor man then burst into tears. "Ah, Father," cried he, "you now see before you the greatest sinner on earth." He then told the saint that he had not been to confession for forty-two years. During that time he had fallen into every sin. He had been guilty of witchcraft. He had pledged his soul to the devil. He had committed murder. He had even broken into a church and stolen the sacred vessels from the tabernacle.

The poor man trembled and wept as he told these horrible crimes. He was heart-broken with shame and grief. Ah! but who can tell his joy when the priest at last absolved him. So great indeed was his happiness

that he begged the saint to publish everywhere this wonderful example of God's mercy, in order that others too might be encouraged to go to confession!

After Peter had denied his Master the third time Jesus cast on him one of those looks that the heart can never forget. "*Conversus Jesus respexit illum.*" Oh! how eloquent, how impressive was that look! This look of Jesus humbled Peter, but also filled him with hope.

This reproachful look of Jesus showed Peter the greatness of his sin, but at the same time it assured him of pardon. It invited him to repent and excited him to love. Peter trusted in the mercy of Jesus; he read his pardon in the look of his Master and his confidence was not deceived. Jesus not only pardoned the crime of Peter, but he re-established him in all his privileges. Peter still remained head of the Church, supreme Pastor, charged with feeding the sheep and lambs; charged with the government of the entire flock.

Jesus gives Peter the same place of predilection that he had before his fall. Peter is the first of the apostles to whom Jesus announces his resurrection: "*Dicite discipulo ejus et Petro.*" (Mark xvi, 7.) Jesus favors him with a special apparition before showing himself to the other apostles. "*Visus est Petro, et post hæc undecim.*" (I. Cor. xv, 5.) O how wonderful is the mercy of God! Ah! let us not refuse our Lord the pleasure he finds in pardoning the sinner. "Behold," he says, my name, my titles, my attributes—all that I am belongs to you, O sinner, the moment you return to me." Truly, God is good and patient and merciful beyond all comprehension. "*Miserator et misericors Dominus: longanimis et multum misericors.*" (Ps. cii, 8.)

Be not discouraged, therefore, at the remembrance of your sins, however numerous and enormous they may be. As far as the East is from the West, so far I will cast away all your iniquities. "*Quantum distat ortus ab occidente, longe fecit nobis iniquitates nostras.*" (Ps. cii, 12.)

St. Gregory says that God often shows more love to those who have thoroughly repented of their fall than to those who have never sinned, but who are lukewarm in his service. "The just man rises from his fall stronger than before," says St. Bernard, "and thus in a wonderful way sin co-operates in perfecting his virtue." Does not that fall make us better which renders us more humble and more wary?

Father Balthazar Alvarez used to say : "If one who has offended me, were to acknowledge his fault, and ask pardon, should I not be satisfied with him? Undoubtedly I should. And were he to perform the most rigorous penances, and were he to make the firm resolution to serve me faithfully for the future, should I not feel still more favorably disposed towards him? Undoubtedly I should. And if he could not, without my assistance, obtain the true spirit of penance, should I not give him that assistance? Undoubtedly I should. And if I sincerely desired to be his friend, and he seemed anxious to be mine, should I not heartily hold out my hand to him? Undoubtedly I should."

What! I who am so evil, would do all this for a sinner, and will not God, who is goodness itself, behave with equal generosity towards me? Let me not insult him by supposing that his mercy is less than mine. If I am willing to satisfy his justice and to be reconciled to him, he

will not only be satisfied, but he will even help me with his infinite power. Of this I am certain, first, because God is good, and secondly, because he is my father :

There is a counsellor who, after having won universal esteem by his uprightness and zeal during a long life of usefulness, is summoned at last before the tribunal of justice. On the way he remembers that the judge before whom he has to appear was once his partner in the legal profession. He also remembers that he saved some of the judge's most intimate friends by defending their cause before the bar of justice. Moreover, he even saved the life of this very judge at a time when he was abandoned by all his friends. These thoughts encourage him ; he feels confident that the judge will not condemn him. O priest of God ! you are this counsellor. You pleaded the cause of sinners before the bar of divine justice. Like Jesus himself, you have discharged the office of mediator and intercessor. The intimate friends of your judge are the souls that you have sent before you to heaven. Your judge is Jesus Christ, whom you have defended over and over again as often as you have converted sinners, who are the members of his mystical Body. Lift up your head then with confidence ; Jesus Christ will not allow his priest to be condemned, if he is truly repentant.

In the Life of Blessed Brother Gerard we read of a wonderful act of charity performed by the servant of God in behalf of a priest whom Monsignor Amato, Bishop of Lacedogna, had sent to the Redemptorist convent at Illice-to to make a retreat. This unhappy man had dishonored his sacred calling by leading for several years a scandalous life. All the means employed, severity as well as

kindness, all utterly failed to reform him. He conformed outwardly to the spiritual exercises; but inwardly he remained the same hardened sinner, resolved to continue his life of sin. To play the hypocrite to the end, he wished, like the others who were making the retreat, to approach holy Communion on the day appointed. On his way to church the wretched priest was met by the servant of God. Gerard stopped him and said: "Where are you going?" "I am going to Communion," said the sinner. "To Communion!" answered Gerard, in a tone of voice which expressed at the same time horror, indignation and reproof. "To Communion! you are going to Communion! And this sin and that and that you did not confess. Go back and make your confession, but make a good confession, if you do not wish the earth to open and swallow you alive!" Greatly affected by these words, which convinced him that Gerard could read his heart, the priest began to repent in earnest; he confessed his sins and made a firm resolution to change his life. He then left the convent and returned to his home. His fervor lasted, however; only a few months. The unfortunate man fell back into his evil habits, and became even worse than before. The following year he again came to Illiceto to make his retreat at the convent. Human respect led him to assume again the mask of the hypocrite, and as if he had forgotten the supernatural insight which Gerard possessed, he had the boldness to assure the saintly brother that all was well with him, and that he had not relapsed into his former sins. But the servant of God could not be deceived. Illuminated by divine light, he saw the real condition of the wretched man's soul, and he was deeply grieved at the brazen

falsehood he had uttered, in order to cloak his crimes. The zeal of the saintly brother was roused. He resolves to save this soul, cost what it might. With fervent prayers he besought God to bestow on him the necessary power, charity and patience. He then took a crucifix and proceeded to the room which had been assigned to the unfortunate priest. Having entered the room, he immediately shut the door and windows. Gerard was very much agitated. His heart was inflamed by an ardent zeal, a tender love and a holy indignation. "What does all this mean, my dear sir?" cried he, addressing the unhappy priest. How dare you offend God in this manner? Alas! ungrateful wretch! You say you have done nothing! You have not relapsed! Look at these wounds of Jesus Christ! Meditate on them. Who caused them? Was it not you? Who but you has caused this blood to flow from his veins? At these words Gerard held the crucifix before the eyes of the sinner; and lo! from its hands and feet there flowed forth real blood,—a miracle which did not fail to make an impression on the mind of the unfortunate priest. "What harm has your God done you?" continued Gerard with increased energy. "For you he wished to be born in a stable; for you he lay on straw, deprived of everything!" While Gerard was speaking, the priest saw the Infant Jesus in the hands of the brother. "What!" continued Gerard, "you dare insult your God, and you insult him so grievously! Remember that no one can do this with impunity! God is good, but in the end he chastises with rigor. If you do not cease your wicked life, you too shall feel the just vengeance of God. See here the punishment that awaits you!" Gerard made a sign with his hand, and lo! before the

eyes of the sinner there stood a horrible demon, who seemed ready to seize the wretched man and bear him away. The unhappy priest trembled and was struck dumb with terror. "Begone, unclean beast!" cried Gerard, when he noticed the effect produced upon the unfortunate man; and instantly the vision disappeared. Now at last the heart of the sinner was filled with terror and contrition. The love of God and the hatred of the demon, which had been thus palpably represented to him, completely changed his heart. He could no longer resist. As soon as Gerard had left him, he hastened to Father Petrella, made his confession, narrated to him the miracles which had converted him, and gave the Father permission to publish them for the edification and instruction of all. This time, indeed, the priest's conversion was sincere. He led ever after an edifying and exemplary life.

THE CAPUCHIN'S SERMON AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST.
STEPHEN, VIENNA.

A Capuchin, preaching a Lenten sermon at the great Cathedral of St. Stephen, in Vienna, is said to have startled his audience by the following fearful narration:

"There was once a vast and wealthy monastery in this duchy. Its vineyards produced rich and well-flavored wine. Its barns were filled with all manner of store. Fat beeves grazed in its meadows. Carp by thousands were leaping in its fish-ponds. The neighboring trout-stream was the pride of the monks and the envy of every other religious house in Germany. Well! the reverend fathers ate, drank, and were merry. They never kept a Lenten fast. They knew naught of the pangs of hunger, or the

humiliations of penury ; they neither fed the famishing, nor clothed the naked. They had wine in abundance. So they caroused from night till morning, and from morning to night. One solemn day, a day of penance and prayer, they were indulging in wild uproar and revelry. The refectory echoed with snatches of licentious song, and laughter following some double-edged jibe. Suddenly, a loud knock was heard at the outer door, knock, knock, knock. The janitor went to open it, and was startled by the apparition of a thin, tall man. His skull bones were scarcely covered with the parchment-like skin that stretched over them. He was attired in the habit of the order, but the shape was antiquated ; it was, moreover, threadbare and moth-eaten. In hollow and sepulchral tones he asked for admittance. The janitor was alarmed, and, shutting the gate on the stranger, went to seek instructions from the superior. ‘There stands at the gate an odd, queer man, who asks for admittance. He wears the habit of our order, but’——‘No *buts*,’ said the abbot ; ‘let him in. We must show hospitality to our brethren. Give him a chair by my side, fill him a goblet of wine, and fetch forthwith knife and platter.’ The strange monk was introduced ; he bowed ; he took his seat ; but his head was covered with his cowl ; he ate not a morsel, he drank not a drop. In a few minutes more knocks were heard at the gate : *knock*, KNOCK, KNOCK ! Again the janitor approached, trembling, and faltered forth, ‘O sir, there are hundreds and hundreds of these thin monks before the gate, demanding admittance !’ ‘Let them all in ! We’ve wine enough to last till the millennium !’ So in they came, crowding the refectory. The hall was crammed ; the vestibule, the

steps of the pulpit, where the reader edified the brethren while they dined ; the pulpit itself, and many stood on the book-board half poised in the air. Then there arose a distant sound as of crackling, crackling, crackling ; a deadly odor as of flesh burning, mingled with sulphurous steam. The living monks were filled with consternation. Their knees smote one another and their tongues clave to the roof of their mouth ; they felt that they were in the presence of the dead. Then uprose the first ghost that had appeared, and said, ' Brethren, I was once the abbot of this ancient and venerable house. I ate, I drank, I caroused, I never worshipped. In my heart, I neither feared God nor regarded man ; and now I am tormented in the flames. These were my companions ; they led a similar life of gluttony and lust, and they are, in like manner, tormented. But we must glorify the Lord even in the fire ! So sing, brethren, GLORIA PATRI, ET FILIO, ET SPIRITUI SANCTO.' A loud clap of thunder accompanied their chant. When it was finished the strange guests had disappeared, the refectory contained only the living monks. They repented ; they did works meet for repentance. They sold their cellar of wine, and rebuilt their church with great magnificence. They founded a hospital. They fed the poor. They nursed the plague-stricken, in the year of the great pestilence. They died in the odor of sanctity."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE THREE SPECIAL GRACES WHICH WE MUST ASK OF GOD EVERY DAY OF OUR LIFE.

St. Alphonsus says in his treatise on prayer that we must ask of God three special graces : first, the pardon of all the sins of our past life ; secondly, the gift of the love of God ; and, thirdly, the gift of final perseverance, and the grace to persevere till death in praying for this great gift. We should ask these three graces not only in our meditations, but also at Mass and in our thanksgiving after Mass, and in all our spiritual exercises.

We ought first to pray for the pardon of all our past sins, because we do not know, and shall not know till death, whether they have all, together with their temporal punishment, been fully pardoned. Holy Scripture tells us that we know not whether we are worthy of love or hatred. (Eccles. ix, 1.) And though God had revealed to us that our sins were forgiven, we should still continue till death to beg of him “to wash us still more from our sins, and to cleanse us from our iniquities ;” for, after the guilt of sin has been remitted, the temporal punishment due to it frequently and generally remains. Among the temporal punishments due to sin after the remission of its guilt, the saints count the withholding of many of God’s graces, which are necessary for our salvation and sanctification. Hence the Holy Ghost tells us not to be without fear about sins forgiven. “*De propitiato peccato noli esse sine timore.*” (Ecclus. v, 5.) In order, then,

to secure not only the pardon of all our past sins, but also the graces which may be withheld in punishment of them, we must pray frequently and fervently in our meditations for the complete and entire remission of all our sins, and of all the penalties due to them. We read in the Gospels that a certain master remitted the whole debt of his servant because he was entreated to do so. "I forgave thee all thy debt because thou besoughtest me." (Matt. xviii, 32.) So, also, will our Lord forgive us the debt of temporal punishment if we fervently and assiduously beseech him to do so. He has said: "Ask and you shall receive."

We should, however, not only *ask* of God the full remission of the temporal punishment, we should also, at the same time, make use of other means which he has given us to cancel it. There are certain priests who, like many Christians, make the mistake of contenting themselves with the performance of the penance enjoined in confession. They imagine that they have done enough when they have performed this penance, though, in fact, it is often far lighter than their sins deserve.

Every sin deserves punishment in proportion to its grievousness. "The more we have sinned," says St. Cyprian, "the more tears we ought to shed. The penance should be no less than the crime. The greater the crime, the greater should be the satisfaction. Satisfaction being an act of justice, it should clearly bear some proportion to your offence. Now, if you consider the infinite majesty of God, who is provoked by your sin, if you reflect on your own ingratitude, if you remember how many benefits and favors you have slighted, and how many graces you have abused, you cannot possibly imagine that such

short and small penances as are generally enjoined in confession, bear any proportion to your offences. If you know that you have committed not only one, but several most grievous sins, and that on account of them you have deserved to be forever punished with the devils in hell, how can you think that a few short prayers said, perhaps, with little or no devotion, will be sufficient to atone for so many insults offered to God? Can you call this "bringing forth worthy fruits of penance?"

Let every one rest assured that there is more punishment due to his sins than he imagines. We should, therefore, endeavor to obtain the remission of temporal punishment due to our sins, not only by sacramental penance and prayer, but also by voluntary works of penance and charity. By works of penance we understand every kind of bodily and spiritual mortification. By bodily penances we mortify the flesh, and deprive it of its pleasures and comforts. By spiritual penances, we mortify our passions and irregular desires. It is a very salutary penance to keep ourselves always modest and recollected; to speak always calmly and discreetly; to mortify our curiosity.

Another excellent penance is the mortification of our intellect, judgment, will, and self-love. We mortify the intellect by rejecting all vain imaginations, all useless and irrelevant thoughts. Such vain thoughts and imaginations cause us to lose our time, produce in us aversion to labor and to all serious employment, and become the source of thousands of temptations.

We mortify our judgment by yielding to the views of others, that is, provided there is nothing therein contrary to the will of God.

We mortify our will by acting constantly according to the holy will of God.

We mortify our self-love by waging, continually, war against our evil inclinations and unruly temper.

He who continually mortifies his evil propensities will be filled with divine grace. If we punish ourselves, God will not punish us. He will remit the punishment we deserve for our sins. If we pardon nothing to ourselves, he will pardon everything. If we are strict with ourselves he will be merciful to us.

By works of charity we understand both corporal and spiritual works of mercy. "Redeem thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor," said the holy prophet Daniel to King Nabuchodonosor. (Chap. iv., 24.) Now, why is it that alms destroy sin, and the temporal punishment due to sin?

First.—Because those who are merciful to others, obtain mercy, according to the words of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v, 7.) Alms, of course, do not remit mortal sin *directly* (the remission of mortal sin being obtained only by confession), but *indirectly*, because they are a powerful means to obtain from God the grace of sincere sorrow and amendment of life. We read in the acts of the Apostles (chap. x, 7), that at Cæsarea there lived a certain centurion, named Cornelius, a religious man, *giving much alms, and always praying to God.* As he was yet a heathen, the Lord sent him an angel, who told him to send for Peter, and be instructed in the true faith. Now, what induced our Lord to bestow this great grace upon this man? It was his great charity to the poor, as the angel of the Lord himself declared: "Thy prayers, and thy alms," said he, "have ascended for a memorial in the sight of God."

St. Eustace, also, while yet a heathen, was very charitable to the poor. Christ himself one day appeared to him, and persuaded him to become a Christian. He and his whole family were converted, and died as martyrs.

Second—Alms-giving is said to destroy sin, because the poor pray to God for their benefactors, and their prayers cannot remain unheard. "The Lord hears the sighs and prayers of the poor," says Holy Scripture. (Ps. x, 17.)

Third.—To give alms is an act of charity ; but "charity covers a multitude of sins," says the Apostle St. James. (Chap. v, 20.) On account of his great charity to the poor, the Emperor Zeno escaped temporal punishment. John Moschus, in his "Spiritual Meadow," tells us that this emperor had outraged the daughter of a certain lady. This lady went to church every day, and prayed to God to avenge her on the emperor. She prayed thus for several days, with tears in her eyes. At last, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, and said that the hands of God were tied, and that he was prevented from punishing the emperor by his great charity to the poor. (Chap. clxxv.) "Water," says Holy Scripture, "quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins." (Eccles. iii, 3.) "Indeed," says St. Augustine, (lib. 21, civit. 37) "there are some who cannot be saved without alms, because they are so deeply immersed in sin and irregular desires, that they cannot free themselves from their evil habits by means of the ordinary graces of God ; they need a more powerful grace, which will be granted only through the prayers of the poor. Alms-giving is, then, like a propitiatory sacrifice offered to appease God. St. Paul writes : "Do not forget to do good, and 'to give liberally,' for by such sacri-

fices God's favor is obtained." (Heb. xiii, 16.) St. Ambrose calls alms-giving a *second baptism*. (Serm. 32.) "Should any one have committed sin after baptism, let him appease the Lord and purify his soul by alms-giving. For Christ has said: 'Give alms, and behold, all things are clean unto you.' " (Luke xi, 41.)

Alms-giving, however, is not only a propitiatory sacrifice; it is also a sacrifice of praise. *First*—Alms are given in honor and praise of God. *Second*—Alms make the poor praise God for having inspired the giver to relieve them in their necessities. *Third*—When others see this charity, they, too, praise God for it, and feel induced to imitate it. *Fourth*—As the charitable man bestows alms for the love of God, he often receives great consolation, even in this life, and therefore thanks and praises God for the grace of being able to give alms.

It is, indeed, a great act of mercy, on the part of God, to receive alms, both as a sacrifice of praise and as a sacrifice of propitiation for sin.

Hence every pastor should love the really poor as dearly as the apple of his eye. He should have for them a mother's tenderness. He should love them in Christ and Christ in them, who is called "Pater pauperum." He should relieve their necessities to the best of his power and with such kindness and earnestness as a good father displays in providing the necessities of life for his little ones. God loves the priest who is a cheerful giver, and blesses all his words and labors.

Patience in our sufferings is another means to cancel the temporal punishment due to sin. We atone for our sins by suffering, in the spirit of penance, all our daily crosses and trials, the cares of life, the ailments of the

body, the doubts and scruples of conscience which often harass us after confession ; the loss of honor and wealth, public and private afflictions,—in a word, all the evils that afflict us in this life. All these afflictions and trials, if endured with patience and resignation, become, as it were, a sacrifice of propitiation to God and a powerful means of atoning for our sins.

Another, and the most powerful means of satisfying the justice of God for our sins, is the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Holy Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation for the living and for the dead. In this sacrifice, Jesus Christ offers himself to his heavenly Father in satisfaction for our sins. Those priests, therefore, who celebrate or hear Mass devoutly, with the intention to atone for their sins and to obtain the remission of all temporal punishments, cancel their indebtedness to God quicker than by any other kind of good works.

Another and a very efficacious means to obtain from God the forgiveness of all temporal punishment due to our sins, is to forgive and to pray for our enemies. To pray for those who wish us evil, is an extremely difficult act, and one of heroic charity. It is free from self-love and self-interest, and it is not only counselled, but even commanded by our Lord. (Matt. v, 44.) If we forgive, nay, if we even beg God also to forgive our enemies, we thereby sacrifice honor and thus raise ourselves to the great dignity of true children of God,—yea, even to an unspeakably sublime resemblance to his divinity, as our Lord himself declares : “ If you pray for those who hate, calumniate and persecute you, you will be children of your Father who is in heaven ; who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust.”

(Matt. v, 45.) There is nothing more characteristic, more worthy of God, than to have mercy and to spare, to do good to his enemies, and thus to make them become his friends, his children, and heirs of his everlasting kingdom.

Now, by imitating God's goodness in a point so aversive to our nature, we give him the greatest glory, and do such violence to his tender and meek heart as to cause him not only to forgive the sins of our enemies, but also to grant all our prayers, the forgiveness of our sins, and the temporal punishment due to them.

Most touching is that which Father Avila relates of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. One day this saint prayed to God to give great graces to all those who had in any way injured her; nay, even to give the greatest graces to those who had injured her most. After this prayer, our Lord said to her: "My daughter, never in your life did you make a prayer more pleasing to me than the one which you have just said for your enemies. On account of this prayer I forgive not only all your sins, *but even all temporal* punishments due to them."

But some one, perhaps, says: "I have no enemies. I have nothing to forgive. Hence I cannot make use of this means to obtain the remission of the temporal punishment due to my sins." If this be the case, then say to Almighty God: "O Lord, if I had a thousand enemies, for thy sake I would forgive them, love them and pray for them." You may also say to our Lord: "O my God, if it be thy will that I should be suddenly struck down by the hand of my enemy, without having even the time to make an act of forgiveness, I, now, for thy sake, not only forgive him, from the bottom of my heart, but I also beseech thee to bless him and convert him, that we

both may love and praise thy boundless mercy forever in heaven." Thus you will practise, at least in desire, the highest degree of charity, which, according to St. Francis de Sales, is to forgive our enemies; and rest assured that our dear Lord will take the will for the deed.

If, however, we have no opportunity to practise this degree of charity, in reality, we shall always find plenty of occasions to practise the degree next to it. This consists in bearing with our neighbor's whims, weaknesses, faults of character, disagreeable manners, and the like, trying to make ourselves all to all. The practise of this kind of charity will equally move our Lord to grant us the pardon of all the temporal punishment due to our sins.

Another very efficacious means to cancel the temporal punishments due to our sins is *frequent confession*.

The principal object of our life on earth should be to prepare ourselves for the eternal enjoyment of the vision of God in heaven. This preparation is made by leading a pure and holy life. We have already seen that, by a good general confession, great purity of soul and the remission of a very large portion of temporal punishment are obtained. Now in order to preserve and increase this purity of soul, and to satisfy completely the justice of God for our sins, we ought to have frequent recourse to the sacrament of penance.

Blosius tells us that our dear Saviour said one day to St. Bridget, that in order to acquire his spirit, and preserve the same when acquired, she should often confess her sins and imperfections to the priest. (*Monit. Spirit.*, c. v.)

The greatest gift God can bestow upon a soul is the gift of divine love. This gift of perfect charity he bestows on the souls that are spotless and pure in his sight. He imparts this gift to the soul, in proportion to its purity. It is certain that frequent confession is one of the most effectual means of speedily attaining great purity of soul ; since, of its very nature, it helps us to acquire that cleanness of heart which is the crowning disposition for receiving the gift of divine love.

“Blessed are the clean of heart.” (Matt. v.) Some have imagined that cleanness of heart consists in an entire freedom from all sin and all imperfections whatsoever. But such cleanness of heart has been the privilege only of Jesus Christ and his ever-blessed mother, Mary. No one else can, without God’s special grace, lead so spotless a life, in this polluted world, as not to contract some stain. St. Thomas Aquinas says that a man can avoid each particular venial sin, but not all in general. And St. Leo the Great says of persons wholly devoted to God’s service, that, owing to the frailty of our nature, not even such pious persons are free from the dust of trivial transgressions. (Serm. iv. de quadr.)

Since, then, cleanness of heart cannot mean an entire freedom from sin, it must imply two things : first an exact custody of our hearts, and a strict watchfulness over our outward actions, in order to avoid, as far as possible, the committing of a single wilful fault. The stricter the watch which a person keeps over his actions, and the more successful he is in diminishing the number of his failings, the more unblemished will be his purity.

Secondly, as, in spite of all the caution we can take, we shall ever be contracting some slight defilement of

soul, it will be necessary to be constantly careful to cleanse our hearts from the impurities which accumulate through the more trivial faults into which we so frequently fall.

The cleanliness of a fine hall does not imply that no dust shall ever fall upon the floor, walls, painting, or furniture. Such cleanliness may not be looked for even in a royal residence. It supposes only that the palace and its precincts be often swept and dusted, and that everything opposed to cleanliness be removed. A lady, however particular on the point of cleanliness, does not require that her garments should preserve their first whiteness, for that, she knows, is impossible ; but she is careful to keep them from all stain, and to have them frequently washed and cleansed from such stains as they may have contracted. The same holds good of purity of heart, which cannot, of course, consist in entire freedom from faults of every kind, but in carefully watching over self, in guarding against any wilful defilement, and in frequently purifying the conscience.

Now these are precisely the two effects which frequent confession produces in the soul. Hence, we attain, by its means, more speedily than by any other, to that purity of soul which is the crowning disposition for receiving divine love. There is nothing in the world that can cleanse our garments so thoroughly as sacramental confession purifies our soul. In this sacrament the soul is cleansed in the bath of Christ's blood. The blood of Jesus purifies the soul from every defilement, and renders it whiter than the lily, and purer than the driven snow. This is what the Apostle St. John assures us, when he says : " If we confess our sins, God is faith-

ful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. (I. John i, 9.)

No wonder, then, that so many of the saints confessed their sins every day. Such was the practice of St. Catharine of Sienna, of St. Bridget of Sweden, of Blessed Coletta, of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and of many others. St. Francis Borgia went to confession even twice a day. If worldlings cannot bear to appear with a stain on their countenance, before those whom they love, what wonder if souls that love God endeavor to purify themselves more and more, in order to render themselves more pleasing in the eyes of the Lord?

Bodily medicine, if very sparingly used, gives relief, it is true, while, if frequently applied, it restores or preserves health; thus, too, confession, if made even but seldom, produces saving effects in the soul, while, if made frequently, it produces in the soul the fulness of perfection.

To this we may add another most important reflection: it is that confession, made frequently, is a most effectual means of disarming our ghostly enemy, and thus rendering him unable to injure us or hinder our spiritual progress. It is easy to account for this, since all the power which the enemy has over us comes from the sins that we commit. Now, if these sins be mortal, they put him in full possession of our souls; if venial, they do not indeed give him entrance into our hearts, but they embolden him to attack us with greater violence. Hence, if we confess frequently and properly, our soul will be habitually free from sin, and thus the devil will be excluded from our hearts; he will not have even the cour-

age or the power to harm us; so that we shall be free and unshackled in our pilgrimage towards heaven.

Cæsarius relates (Mirac., lib. ii. c. xxxviii.) that a theologian of blameless life, being about to die, beheld the devil lurking in a corner of his room. The dying priest addressed the fiend in the words of St. Martin: "What art thou doing here, thou cruel beast?" He, then, by virtue of his priestly power, commanded the devil to declare what it was that most baffled his efforts. Though thus adjured, the devil remained silent. The priest again conjured the demon, in the name of God, to answer him, and to answer the truth. The evil spirit thereupon replied: "There is nothing in the church which does us so much harm, which so unnerves our power, as frequent confession."

It is thus that by fervent prayer and works of penance and charity, every one, even the most abandoned sinner, however enormous his crimes may have been, can easily and infallibly avert that kind of chastisement of sin, which consists in the withholding of certain graces necessary for salvation and sanctification.

Secondly we must ask of God the grace of perseverance.

There was once an Eastern king, in his day the richest of men. A Grecian sage came to visit him, and, having seen all his glory and his majesty, was pressed by this poor child of vanity to say whether he was not the happiest of men. "Wait," said the wise man, "until you see the end." So it is as regards spiritual wealth. Almighty God, in spite of his ample promises, and his faithfulness to them, has not put out of his own hands the issues of life and death: the end comes from him as well as the beginning. When he has once given us grace, he

has not, on that account, made over to us our own salvation. We can merit much ; but, as we could not merit the grace of conversion, neither can we merit the grace of perseverance. From first to last we are dependent on him who made us.

The grace of perseverance is, according to blessed Leonard, the grace of graces ; this is the grace on which our salvation depends. If God gives it to us, we shall be saved ; if not, we shall be lost. This is the gift which distinguishes the elect in heaven from the reprobate in hell ; if the elect had not received it, they should be lost ; and if the damned had received it, they should now be in glory. It crowns all the other gifts of God ; without it they shall be a source of greater damnation. This gift God gives to infants without any co-operation on their part, by taking them out of life before they lose their baptismal innocence. But St. Augustine teaches that God never gives it to any adult that does not pray for it. The grace of final perseverance is a special gift, which we cannot merit, as the Council of Trent teaches in these words : “ *Aliunde haberi non potest, nisi ab eo qui potens est, eum qui stat, statuere ut perseveranter stet.* ” (Sess. 6, c. xiii.) We cannot merit it by the sacraments, nor by penitential austerities, nor by alms-deeds. God has given us only one means of infallibly obtaining it, and that is by praying for it continually till our last breath. It is not enough to ask this gift once, twice, for a year, or for ten years ; our petitions for it must cease only with our life, and must be frequently offered in meditation, which is the fittest time for asking God’s graces. Whoever asks it to-day obtains it for to-day ; but he who does not pray for it till to-morrow may fall on to-morrow, and be lost.

There is a pious priest. He has received many graces. He has lived in them so long. He has overcome many temptations. He has acquired many virtues. He possesses many supernatural gifts. He seems, from the very completeness of his sanctity, which encircles him on every side, to have, as it were, become impeccable. That he has started well, seems a reason why he will increase in virtue every day of his life. He seems fit to scale heaven by an inward power. Thus we may look at him and believe that a reverse or a fall is impossible. But the Holy Ghost tells us : " Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Holy Scripture furnishes us with more than one instance by which this truth is confirmed. Who was so variously gifted, so inwardly endowed, so laden with external blessings, as Solomon? Yet Solomon, who was the wisest of men, was lifted up and fell so very low! He who wrote the Song of songs became a slave of vile affections. He fell in love with idolatrous women and followed their gods. The fall of Solomon shows that an exuberance of merits in a person is only a woe in the event if he lacks one gift,—the gift of perseverance.

There is a priest. He has been converted from a sinful life. He is very different from what he was. He feels the comfort of the change. He feels the peace and satisfaction of a cleansed conscience; but he is so taken up with that comfort and peace, that he rests in them and feels secure. He does not guard against temptation, or pray for support under it. He does not consider that, as he has changed from sin to fervor in religion, so he may go back from fervor to sin. He does not realize enough his continual dependence on God. Some great temptation, or

some extraordinary vicissitude of life, comes upon him: he is surprised, he falls, and perhaps he never rises.

How many were good pious students, yet are now careless priests ! They were blameless before their ordination, yet now they are captives to habits of sin. How many are there who, by mere change of place, have lost their holy religious fervor, and who first became careless, and then shameless !

The fall of so many must be a warning to every one of us. Indeed, the holier a priest is, the greater reason has he to look carefully how he walks, lest he stumble and be lost. A deep conviction of this truth has been to the saints their only preservative. Had they not feared to fall, they would never have persevered. Hence, like St. Paul, they are always conscious of their sin and their peril. To hear them speak about themselves, we should think them the most depraved of sinners and the most unstable of penitents. Every day St. Philip Neri used to make a protest to God, with the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, saying : " Lord, beware of me to-day lest I should betray Thee, and do Thee all the mischief in the world."

If a man knows that he has never deserved the good graces of his king, that the friendship which he enjoys is a pure gift, and that he is to possess it only as long as he continues to ask for it, would he not, in case he wished to enjoy it always, be obliged to entreat his benefactor to continue this favor ? Now, this is precisely the case with the just in regard to the friendship, the grace of God. The grace of God is a pure gift, which no one can obtain by his own unaided efforts ; and, when it is obtained, no one can preserve it until death, unless God assist him in

a particular manner. To possess the grace of God, is to possess God himself, the infinite good. Now, to persevere in the possession of this grace until death is so great a favor, that, according to the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, no one can merit it, even were he to perform the good works of all the saints in heaven. God bestows this gift gratuitously ; and he grants it, as St. Augustine teaches, to all those who daily pray for it. The saint says : “ We must pray every day for the gift of perseverance, because even the just are every day in danger of losing it.”

God, as we have said, has surrounded us with striking proofs of our weakness. He has permitted the most illustrious men to fall, that we might live in fear. The first man and woman, Adam and Eve ; the most pious of kings, David ; the prince of apostles and the vicar of Christ, St. Peter, all fell.

Among the great falls recorded in ecclesiastical history stand the names of Tertullian and Origen, names once so honorable. St. Macarius tells us (Hom. 27) that a certain monk, after having been favored with a wonderful rapture and many great graces, fell, by pride, into several grievous sins. This saint mentions one who had formerly lived a long time with him in the desert, prayed often with him, and was favored with an extraordinary gift of compunction and a miraculous power of curing many sick persons, was at last delighted with the applause of men, and drawn into the sin of pride, and died an apostate.

Now, when we see Adam in paradise, in a state of innocence, sustained by great grace, endowed with an excellent mind, with perfect knowledge of natural and divine things, at the mere word of a woman, whom he

fears to displease, offend his God and Creator, from whose hands he has just issued, and drag down the whole human race in his fall, what ought we, the children of such a father, corrupted as we are by the world, the flesh and the devil, to fear ?

When we see David, the man according to God's own heart, fall, at a single thoughtless glance at a woman, into the commission of two enormous sins, in which he remained for a whole year without realizing their heinousness ; when we think of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, after having promised so solemnly rather to die than abandon his Lord, abandoning and denying him thrice, with oaths and imprecations, at the simple word of a mean servant ; when we see how Tertullian, Origen, Osius, the great bishop of Cordova, and other pillars of the Church were vanquished and overcome, though they seemed immovably fixed in faith and all virtues—with such striking examples before us, of deplorable weakness among the greatest and best, what are we to think of our own weakness in face of the very same enemies who overcame them, unless we are sustained by that all powerful aid which can come from God alone ?

Now the Lord of mercy gives this strength to all who ask for it. To those who pray the Lord has promised to give not only one, two, or a hundred, or a thousand graces, but all the lights and graces, without a single exception, which are necessary to bring us and to lead us up to eternal glory. “All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you.” The Son of God was not content with saying, “All things” or “whatsoever” ; but, to exclude the possibility of a single grace being excepted,

he said: "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray . . . shall come unto you."

Prayer is that powerful means which God has given to every one to preserve his grace and friendship.

Even though it should seem that all is lost, that we cannot overcome the temptations of the devil, that we cannot avoid the bad example of the world, that we cannot resist the revolts of corrupt nature, let us remember that, as St. Paul assures us, God is faithful, and will never suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength, but will make issue, also, with the temptation, that we may be able to bear it. But we must also remember that God will give us strength in the hour of temptation, *only on condition that we pray for it; that we pray for it earnestly, perseveringly*. "God," says St. Augustine, "does not command what is impossible; if he commands you to do something, he admonishes you at the same time to do what you can, and to ask him for his assistance whenever anything is above your strength, and he promises to assist you to do that which otherwise would naturally be impossible for you to do."

God does not give to the saints even grace to fulfil difficult precepts or duties, unless they pray for it. God, without our asking it, gives us all grace to do what is easy, but not what is difficult. The saints are only promised grace to pray for strength to do what is difficult, and to overcome violent temptations.

After St. Theodore had been cruelly tortured in many different ways, he was at last commanded by the tyrant to stand on red-hot tiles. Finding this kind of torture almost too great to endure, he prayed to the Lord to alleviate his sufferings, and the Lord granted him courage and fortitude to endure these torments until death. (Triumphs of the Martyrs. By St. Alphonsus.)

It was by prayer that the saints were enabled to overcome all their temptations, and to suffer patiently all their crosses and persecutions until death ; the more they suffered, the more they prayed, and the Lord came to their assistance. "He shall cry to me," says the Lord, "and I will hear him. I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him and will glorify him." (Ps. xc, 15.)

This truth we learn especially from the angel who descended with the three children into the fiery furnace. "The angel of the Lord went down with Azarias and his companions into the furnace." (Dan. iii, 49.) The angel of the Lord had descended into the flames before them, otherwise they would have been immediately consumed ; but they did not see him until they prayed to God. After having prayed, they saw how the angel of the Lord drove the flame of the fire out of the furnace, and made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew. "Thus the angel of the Lord," says Cornelius à Lapide, "gives to understand that in persecutions and tribulations prayer is the only means of salvation. Those who pray are always victorious ; those who neglect to pray give way to temptations, and are lost."

"I have known many," says St. Cyprian, "and have shed tears over them, who seem to possess great courage and fortitude of soul, and yet, when on the point of receiving the crown of life everlasting, they fell away and became apostates. Now, what was the cause of this ? They turned away their eyes from him who alone is able to give strength to the weak. They had given up prayer, and commenced to look for aid and protection from man. They considered their own natural weakness ; they

looked at the red-hot gridirons, and at all the other frightful instruments of torture ; they compared the acuteness of the pain with their own strength ; but as soon as one thinks within himself, I can suffer this, but not that, his martyrdom will never be crowned with a glorious end. It was thus that they lost the victory. He alone who abandons himself entirely to the divine will, and who looks for help from God alone, will remain firm and immovable, and persevere to the end. But this can be expected only from him who is gifted with a lively faith, and who does not tremble, or consider how great is the tyrant's cruelty, or how weak is human nature, but who considers only the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, who fights and conquers in his members. No one should lose courage when he has to endure some great bodily or spiritual affliction. Let him trust in the Lord, whose battles he fights. He will not permit any one 'to be tempted beyond his strength, but will grant a happy issue to all his sufferings.' "

"Christians, then," (also priests) says Cornelius à Lapide, "cannot make a better use of their leisure time than to spend it in prayer. The saints knew well that prayer was the powerful means to escape the snares of the devil, and therefore they loved and practised nothing so much as this holy exercise.

King David often prayed to the Lord : "Lord, look upon me, and have mercy on me ; for I am alone and poor." (Ps. xxiv. 16.) "I cried with all my whole heart : Hear me, O Lord ; let thy hand be with me to save me. (Ps. cxviii.) He assures us that he prayed without ceasing. "My eyes," said he, "are ever towards the Lord ; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare." (Ps. cxviii.)

Daniel," says St. John Chrysostom, "preferred to die rather than to give up prayer." St. Philip Neri, being one day commanded to pray a little less than usual, said to one of his Fathers: "I begin to feel like a brute." Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice used to say that a Christian (a fortiori a priest) should not let a moment pass by without saying: "My Jesus, have mercy on me!" "As a city fortified by strong walls," says St. John Chrysostom, "cannot be easily taken, so also a soul fortified by prayer cannot be overcome by the devil. The devil is afraid of approaching a soul that prays; he fears the courage and strength that she obtains in prayer; prayer gives more strength to the soul than food does to the body. The more the soul practises prayer, the more will she be nourished and strengthened; and the less she practises prayer the more keenly will she feel her own natural weakness. As plants cannot remain fresh and green without moisture, air, and light, so the soul cannot preserve the grace of God without prayer."

A plant usually prospers only in its native clime. The same is true of the soul. The true home of the soul is God; transplant it, and it will not live. Now, prayer is the means by which the soul is preserved in this its true home. Prayer keeps the soul united to God, and God to the soul, and thus it lives a perfect life. This is most emphatically expressed by St. John Chrysostom. "Every one," he says, "who does not pray, and who does not wish to keep in continual communion with God, is dead; he has lost his life, nay, he has even lost his reason. He must be insane, for he does not understand what a great honor it is to pray; and he is not convinced of the important truth that not to pray is to bring death upon his soul,

as it is impossible for him to lead a virtuous life without the aid of prayer. For how can he be able to practise virtue without throwing himself unceasingly at the feet of him from whom alone comes all strength and courage?" (Lib. de Orando Deum.)

"Which of the just," asks this great saint, "did ever fight valiantly without prayer?" Which of them ever conquered without prayer? (Sermo de Mose.) None of the apostles, nor any of the martyrs, nor any of the confessors, nor any of the holy virgins and widows, nor any of the just in heaven or on earth. Hence all theologians teach that prayer is as necessary for the salvation of adults as baptism is for that of infants. As no infant can enter the kingdom of heaven without baptism, so no adult shall obtain eternal life without asking of God the graces necessary for salvation. Because of this strict and indispensable necessity of asking God's graces, St. Alphonsus tells us that he made it a rule of his order that in every mission conducted by the Redemptorist Fathers there should be a sermon on prayer. He says that every preacher should, in almost all his sermons, exhort his hearers to the practice of prayer, and should admonish them never to cease to call for aid in all their temptations, at least by invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation continues. He cautions every confessor not to be content with endeavoring to excite his penitents to sorrow for their sins, and to a firm purpose of amendment; but to be careful also to impress upon them the necessity of praying for the grace to be faithful to their resolutions, and of asking the divine aid as often as they are tempted to offend God. He concludes his book on prayer in the following words: "I say, and I repeat, and I shall repeat

while I live, that our salvation depends altogether on prayer, and that on that account all writers in their books, all preachers in their sermons, and all confessors in the tribunal of penance, should continually exclaim and repeat: 'Pray, pray, and never cease to pray; for if you continue to pray, your salvation is secure; if you give up prayer, your perdition is inevitable.' "

St. Augustine assures us that he "who does not know how to pray well will not know how to live well." (Homil. 45.) "Nay," says St. Francis of Assisi, "never expect anything good from a soul that is not given to prayer." St. Bernard was wont to say: "If I see a man who is not very fond of prayer, I say to myself: That man cannot be virtuous." St. Charles Borromeo says, in one of his pastoral letters: "Of all means that Jesus Christ has left for our salvation, prayer is the most important." (Act. Eccl. Med. p. 1005.) "Indeed," says St. Alphonsus, "in the ordinary course of Providence, our meditations, resolutions, and promises will all be fruitless without prayer, because we will be unfaithful to the divine inspiration if we do not pray; in order to be able to overcome temptations, to practise virtue, to keep the commandments of God, we need, besides divine light, meditations, and good resolutions, the *actual assistance* of God. Now, this divine assistance is given to those only who pray for it, and who pray for it unceasingly."

The governor Paschasius commanded the holy virgin Lucy to be exposed to prostitution in a brothel; but God rendered her immovable, so that the guards were not able to carry her thither. He also made her an over-match for the cruelty of the persecutors in overcoming fire and other torments. It is only the Lord who can make us

immovable in all our good resolutions ; it is only his grace that can prevent us from being carried by temptation into the abyss of hell. “ Unless the Lord had been my helper,” says David, “ my soul had almost dwelt in hell.” (Ps. xciii.) And, “ Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it. (Ps. cxxvii. 1.) Unless the Lord preserve the soul from sin, all her endeavors to avoid it will be fruitless. “ Lord,” exclaimed St. Philip Neri, “ keep thy hand over me this day ; otherwise thou wilt be betrayed by Philip.”

Father Hunolt, S. J., says that to hope to remain free from sin, and persevere in virtue, and be saved without prayer, is to tempt God, to require of him a miracle ; it is just as absurd as to imagine that you can see without eyes, hear without ears, and walk without feet. Of this we should be firmly convinced. Let us, then, as St. Bernard admonishes us, always have recourse to prayer as to the surest weapon of defence. Let prayer be our first act in the morning. Let us have recourse to prayer whenever we feel tempted to lukewarmness, to impatience, to impurity, or to any other sin. Let us arm ourselves with prayer when we have to mingle with the wicked world, or when we have to fight against our corrupt nature. Let prayer never leave our hearts ; let it never desert our lips ; let it be our constant companion on all our journeys ; let it close our eyes at night ; let it be our exercise of predilection. Every other loss may be repaired, but the loss of prayer never. If, on account of delicate constitution, we cannot fast, we may give alms ; if we have no opportunity to confess our sins, we may obtain forgiveness of them by an act of perfect contrition ; nay, even baptism itself may sometimes be supplied by an earnest

desire for this sacrament, accompanied by an ardent love for God. But as for him who neglects to practise prayer, there is no other means of salvation left. Let us give up every other occupation rather than neglect prayer. Let us persevere in prayer as all the saints have done ; let us follow the example of our divine Saviour, who prayed even to the very last moment of his life ; let us leave this world with prayer upon our lips. Thus prayer will conduct us to heaven, there to reign eternally with our Lord Jesus Christ and all the just in everlasting joy and glory.

Thirdly, we must daily ask with fervor the gift of God's love, as we have seen in one of the preceding chapters.

CHAPTER XV.

DEATH OF THE GOOD PRIEST.

When God had created man he placed him in the beautiful garden of Paradise. “*Posuit eum in paradiso voluptatis.*” (Gen. ii, 15.)

O what a sweet and happy life he led in that abode of bliss ! He enjoyed the familiar converse of God, who spoke to him as a father speaks to his child, as a friend to his friend.

He whom God calls to the priesthood, is placed in the sanctuary as in a terrestrial paradise, where he enjoys so many heavenly delights. The sanctuary is the abode of peace, the dwelling place of angels, the house of God himself. Here God enters into the most intimate communication with his faithful servants. We can say in truth of priests what the queen of Sheba said of the servants of Solomon : *Beati servi tui, qui stant coram te semper.* (III. Reg. x, 8.) Jesus says to his priests, as he said to the Apostles : “*Jam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos meos.*” Indeed, the priest is the intimate friend of Jesus. O what an honor ! what a happiness ! And this is not a mere friendship of form and words. No ! it is real and substantial. Our Lord observes all the laws of perfect friendship. He is a confiding friend. The true friend trusts himself fully to his friend. David placed himself and his fortunes in the hands of Jonathas. Jesus confides his Blessed Mother to the care of St. John. We confide in a true friend as we confide in ourselves. We make

him the confidant of our inmost thoughts and desires. Has not Jesus acted precisely thus towards the apostles and his priests? "*Servus nescit quid faciat dominus ejus,*" says our Lord, "*vos autem dixi amicos meos, quia quæcunque audivi a Patre meo, nota feci vobis.*" (John xv, 15.) Our Lord kept no secrets from the Apostles. *Vobis datum est nosse mysterium regni Dei, cæteris autem in parabolis.*" (Luke viii, 10.) Towards us, too, our Lord shows the same confidence. We are "*dispensatores mysteriorum Dei.*" (I. Cor. iv. 1.) He has empowered us to administer the sacraments, to enrich the faithful with his merits and graces.

With all the confidence of a true friend he confides to our care those immortal souls whom he has purchased with his heart's blood. He gives them to us that we may instruct, console, and protect them and lead them safely to his heavenly kingdom.

Jesus confides to us not only his mystic body—the faithful; he also places his very Self in our hands. He gives up his Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament. He makes us the guardians and dispensers of his sacred Body. He leaves it entirely to our love, to our fervor, whether he is to be visited and honored, or not, in the sacrament of his love; whether he is to be received often and reverently by the faithful, or to be coldly neglected. He trusts in our love, our gratitude. He seems to think us, his priests, incapable of an unworthy action.

And Jesus is a generous friend. The sufferings which our Lord endured for all men, he endured especially for his priests. "To save the world," says St. Alphonsus, "it was, strictly speaking, not necessary that our

Lord should die. A single drop of our Lord's blood, a single tear, a single prayer of his would have sufficed to redeem a thousand worlds, but to establish the priesthood, our Lord had to die. Where else could the priest of the New Law find an offering, holy, spotless and altogether worthy of God?" (Sela.) O, what love, what gratitude do we priests owe to our Lord for having suffered and died expressly for us!

The true friend is ever solicitous for the welfare of his friend. O, how fondly, how carefully does Jesus watch over the welfare of his priests!

God has commissioned his angels to watch over all men. "Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis. In manibus portabunt te, ne forte offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum." But not only do God's angels bear the priests in their hands, God himself bears them in his arms, as he tells us by the mouth of his prophet: "Fœtas, i.e., sacerdotas, ipse portabit." (Isai. xl, 11.) St. John in the Apocalypse beholds our Lord holding seven stars in his hand, and a voice tells him that these seven stars are the angels, that is, the priests and bishops of the seven churches.

Even in the Old Law, God shows how jealously he watches over the welfare of his priests. "Qui vos tetigit," he says, "tangit pupillam oculi mei." (Zach. ii, 8.) "Nolite tangere Christos meos." (Ps. civ.) "Honora Deum ex tota anima tua," says God in the book of Eccl. vii, 32, "et honora sacerdotes." He places the priest, as it were, on a level with himself. God even commands that he who disobeys the priest should be put to death. "Qui autem superbierit, nolens obedire sacerdotis imperio, morietur homo ille." (Deut. xvii, 12.)

In the New Law our Lord speaks, if possible, in still clearer language. He assures us that the honor and obedience shown to the priest are shown to himself. "Qui vos audit, me audit, et qui vos spernit, me spernit." (Luke x, 16.) "Qui recipit vos, me recipit." (Matt. x, 10.)

God provides even for the temporal wants of the priest. The majority of mankind must earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, but the priest must be supported by the people. "Præcipe filiis Israel," says God in the book of Numbers xxxv, 2, "ut dent Levitis de possessionibus suis." "Cave, ne derelinquas Levitam in omni tempore quo versaris in terra." (Deut. xii, 19.)

The obligation of the faithful to support the priest remains still in force in the New Law. "Nescitis quoniam qui in sacrario operantur, quæ de sacrario sunt edunt et qui altari deserviunt, cum altari participant. Ita et Dominus ordinavit iis qui Evangelium annuntiant, de Evangelio vivere. (I. Cor. ix, 13.)

The priest is, indeed, during his life, the object of God's special solicitude. He is the friend, the dearly beloved child of God. "O mira devinæbonitatis dignatio," exclaims St. Gregory, "servi digni non sumus, et amici vocamur. Quanta dignitas hominum esse amicos Dei!" But in the hour of his death, the good priest is far more the object of God's special solicitude. The sinner's presumption, during life, often changes into frightful despair at the dread hour of death. The pious fear of the just, on the contrary, ordinarily gives way to unwavering confidence in God.

The fervent priest, the dispenser of God's mysteries,

when about to render an account of his administration, is naturally seized with fear of God's judgments; but his fear is blended with firm hope. He reassures himself with the thought that he who is to judge him, was his best friend during his life and will, no doubt, continue to be his most faithful friend in the hour of death. "I know," he says, "in whom I have trusted; my treasure is in safe hands. *"Scio, cui credidi, et certus sum, quia potens est depositum meum servare."* (II. Tim. i, 12.) He remembers the unspeakable blessings which he has received from his best Friend and greatest Benefactor. He remembers that he is the work of the power and goodness of God, created in preference to thousands of possible beings. He remembers that God called him to the priesthood also in preference to thousands. *"Ego elegi vos."* He remembers that his vocation to the priesthood is a far higher grace, a more striking proof of God's predilection than even the grace of creation. *"Non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos."* When God created me, he says, he drew me from nothingness; and when he called me to the priesthood, he drew me from the world: *Elegi vos de mundo; from a world buried in sin. "Mundus totus in maligno positus est."* (I John v, 19.)

He remembers what he was, and where he was when our Lord called him to his service; and he says in the words of holy David: *"Suscitans a terra inopem, et de stercore erigens pauperem, ut collocet eum cum principibus, cum principibus populi sui."* (Ps. cxii, 7.)

He remembers how God called him. What means God used; what a happy chain of circumstances brought him to the foot of the altar. O God, he exclaims, how admirable are thy ways! What have I done to merit so glorious

a destiny? Blessed be thy name forever! The graces thou hast bestowed on me are a sacred pledge that thou wilt give thyself to me in heaven. These consoling truths fill the good priest with confidence. He says with St. Paul: "*Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consummavi fidem servavi. In reliquo reposita est mihi corona justitiæ quam reddet mihi Dominus.*" (II. Tim. iv, 7, 8.) On his death-bed, the good priest beholds all the pains endured for God's sake. The hardships are now all over. The remembrance of them remains to encourage and to console him. The whole life of the Saviour was a continual cross and martyrdom. "*Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium,*" (Imit. vi, L. ii, c. 12) and we can say the same of the good priest, who is the faithful image of Christ on earth. How many labors he has undertaken, how many contradictions endured for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls! He has borne all the infirmities of his people. "*Quis infirmatur, et ego non infirmor.*" (II. Cor. xi, 29.) He can say of his parish what Jacob said of his flock: I have borne the heat and the cold for their sake. How many a sleepless night they caused me! *Æstu urebar et gelu, fugiebatque somnus ab oculis meis.*" (Gen. xxxi, 40.)

Perhaps he has often been misunderstood; his intentions have often been maliciously interpreted, and many a time he has received only insults in turn for his benefits. But now he is at the end of his earthly career, what thinks he now of all that he has suffered for the love of God. Where are now all the hardships that he underwent and the persecutions he suffered? All have passed away. The fatigues he endured, the sleepless nights he spent in visiting the sick, the heroic acts of patience he per-

formed in bearing with sinners—all are over ; his acts of self-denial, his privations, his trials—all are now past.

What remains to the good priest ? He has sown in tears. “*Euntes ibant et flebant, mittentes semina sua.*” (Ps. cxxv. 6.) But now he abounds in merits and he reaps in joy. “*Venientes autem venient cum exultatione, portantes manipulos suos.*” (Ibid.) The time of labor is over and the fruit of his labors remains. O blessed hardships ! O happy tribulations ! They have been the occasion of practising so many virtues ; they have merited so rich a reward. How sweet to him is the remembrance of them now ! “*Amodo jam dicit Spiritus, ut requiescant a laboribus suis ; opera enim illorum sequuntur illos.*” (Apoc. xiv, 13.)

The good priest is that faithful Jerusalem to which God has promised the most abundant blessings of peace. “*Declinabo super eam quasi fluvium pacis.*” (Isai. lxvi. 12.) The testimony of a good conscience, which has often softened the bitterness of his pastoral life, fills him with consolation now on his death-bed. He has always sought God in the simplicity of his heart. Docile to the inspirations of grace, he has done little or nothing to repent of at the hour of death. He has committed faults ; for, where is the man that never sins. But he has cancelled these faults by his tears of sorrow and love, and by the sacred Blood of Jesus Christ. God has pardoned his sins, and, in proof of pardon, has filled him with new favors. These faults have by a merciful Providence been turned to his profit, for the remembrance of them has humbled him and filled him with salutary fear. They have filled him with contempt for himself, with compassion for sinners, with patience under the sorest trials, with prudent zeal

in the ministry and with heartfelt gratitude towards God. "The Lord loves me," he says to himself, "he loves me in spite of my ingratitude. I might love him less, if I had less offended him. Oh! my soul, be not disturbed, cherish thoughts of peace, and remember the benefits of the Lord." "*Convertere, anima mea, in requiem tuam, quia Dominus benefecit tibi.*" (Ps. cxiv, 7.)

If he remembers his good works, he is too just not to refer them to God, without whom he could have done nothing meritorious for heaven. "*Gratia Dei sum id quod sum.*" In spending his life in the service of Jesus and in laboring for souls, he does only his duty, and he says with humble confidence: I am but a useless servant. "*Servi inutiles sumus. Quod debuimus facere, fecimus.*" (Luke xvii, 10.)

But the sweet voice of conscience tells him that the grace of God has not been given him in vain. "*Et gratia ejus in me vacua non fuit.*" (I. Cor. xv, 10.) His divine master encourages him interiorly by bestowing on him a praise of which he feels himself unworthy. "*Euge, serve bone et fidelis!*" Good and faithful servant, a few moments more, and thou wilt enter into the joy of thy Lord! When I called thee to my service, I predicted that thou shouldst suffer and weep. "*Plorabitis et flebitis vos.*" (John xvi, 20.) But I also announced to thee that thy sorrow should be changed into joy, and thy joy, no one should take from thee! "*Iterum videbo vos, et gaudebit cor vestrum, et gaudium vestrum nemo tollet a vobis.*" (Ibid.) "I come now to fulfil my promise. Come out of thy prison, O well-beloved soul, master-piece of my grace, instrument of my mercy. Thou hast shared my trials; thou shalt now share in the glory of my kingdom."

The sight of the crucifix fills him with confidence ; the prayers of the Church strengthen him in his last combat ; but, above all, the presence of Jesus himself as his Viaticum fills him with hope and courage. O how many sources of consolation for the good priest, at the hour of death ! He is in peace, because God has firmly established him in hope. “ In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam, quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me. (Ps. iv, 10.)

Oh ! how sweet it is to die when our life has been spent in loving God and in causing him to be loved. It will rarely happen that one of those who have spent their lives in saving souls, dies a bad death. “ Cum effuderis esurienti animam tuam,” says the prophet, “ et animam afflictam repleveris, orietur in tenebris lux tua . . . et requiem tibi dabit Dominus, et implebit splendoribus animam tuam, et ossa tua liberabit.” (Isai. lviii, 10.) If you have spent your life in aiding a person in his necessities, says the prophet, if you have consoled him in his afflictions, the Lord will fill you with light amid the shadows of death ; he will deliver you from perdition.

The Menologium of the Jesuits relates that a good priest of the order, when at the point of death, was filled with so great a joy and confidence that some of the bystanders thought his confidence excessive. They reminded him that his confidence should be tempered by fear. “ What !” said the good priest who had consecrated his life to the salvation of souls ; “ Why should I fear ? Have I been serving Mahomet ? God is faithful and grateful. I have consecrated my life to his service. What have I to fear ?

Ah, if you have ever been present at the death of a good priest, you must have noticed on his countenance

the sweet reflection of the serenity of his soul. "Ridebit in die novissimo." (Prov. xxxi, 25.) You must have heard him say : O good Jesus, come quickly. "Veni et noli tardare." O inexhaustible source of life and light ! I shall be filled when thy glory appears ! "Satiabor, cum apparuerit gloria tua." (Ps. xvi, 15.) And you yourself have undoubtedly prayed : "Moriatur anima morte justorum et fiant novissima mea horum similia." (Numb. xxiii, 10.)

And now, no sooner is his death made known than young and old, rich and poor, hasten to kiss the hand of their deceased pastor. Children who have a natural fear for the dead, can hardly be torn away from the corpse of their good pastor. The poor especially lament the death of their true friend and benefactor. Even strong men shake with emotion. They try in vain to stifle their sobs and tears. All feel that in losing their good parish-priest, they have lost a father, a friend and a brother.

But the labors of their good pastor live on even for generations after he has left this world.

In Phoenixville, Pa., I saw people, young and old, married and single, kneeling and praying at the grave of the good old pastor. He had been dead for years, had a good successor, yet his children could not forget him.

One day an old man came to the grave of his former pastor and prayed there. The good pastor had been dead over forty years. Some one asked the old man why he still prayed at that grave. "Ah," replied he, "he helped me once to make a good general confession. May God reward him for it."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GOOD PRIEST ON THE DAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

The judge of the good priest is Jesus, the God of justice and mercy, who rewards even a cup of cold water given in his name. Jesus rewards even the least good work that we perform for his sake. He rewards every word that we utter in his honor. He rewards even every good desire, every good thought that we entertain for love of him. For everything he rewards us a hundred fold. "*Contuplum accipietis.*" Men repay our good deeds but once, while Jesus rewards us not only in this life, but for all eternity in heaven.

Jesus is the God of love and mercy ; he did so much for the priest's salvation. He was always so kind to sinners. He died to save all. He came to seek the lost sheep. O with what love, with what joy he welcomes the good priest, his faithful servant, who has kept the commandments, who has labored untiringly for the salvation of souls ! Ah ! the good priest finds in Jesus a tender Father rather than a Judge. "*Jam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos.*" (John xv, 5.) Jesus is the true Friend who gave his life for the priest, and who nourished him day after day with his heart's blood.

Our Lord declared the destiny of the good priest when he said : "*Si quis mihi ministrat, me sequatur. Ubi ego sum, ibi et minister meus erit.*" (John xii, 26.)

The good priest labored and suffered in union with Jesus Christ ; it is but just that he should rejoice with

Jesus forever in heaven. "Vos estis," he says, "qui permansistis mecum in tentationibus meis, et ego dispono vobis, sicut disposuit mihi Pater meus regnum." (Luke xxii, 28.) The good priest was the representative of God on earth; he shared in God's own judicial power; on judgment-day, too, he shall sit upon "a throne judging the tribes of Israel." (Ibid.) On judgment-day God will make known to the whole world the good works, the hidden virtues of the good priest. His prayers, his penances, his secret alms, his zealous labors for souls, his burning love for God—all will be made known. How often was he misunderstood, calumniated, condemned and ridiculed! Ah! now on judgment-day, his character is cleared from every stain, from every suspicion. He is praised by Jesus himself, in presence of angels and men and devils! All men shall see how pure was his intention, how he labored solely for God and for souls. All men shall see the heroic virtue with which he overcame the most dangerous, the most obstinate temptations. All men shall see how humble he was in prosperity; how detached his heart was from wealth, how generous he was, how forgiving, how hospitable.

Jesus Christ will honor the good priest as a father and even as a mother. "Whoever doth the will of my heavenly father," says Jesus Christ, "is my mother." "The priest becomes the mother of Jesus Christ," says St. Gregory, "whenever by his word and example he causes Christ to be born in the souls of his fellow-men." St. Bernard calls the priest "parens Christi," because our Lord is born every day sacramentally in the consecrated hands of the priest.

During life Jesus was subject to the priest every day,

every hour in the blessed sacrament. Imagine, then, with what honor he will welcome and glorify the good priest on the last day.

It is certain that the oftener we receive our Lord worthily, the greater will be our glory, our beauty, our majesty, on judgment-day. Now there is hardly any one that receives our Lord as often as the priest. He receives Jesus every day in holy Mass. Ah! there are so many priests who have even the sweet privilege, the blessed obligation of saying two Masses almost every Sunday!

Moreover, the priest alone has the inestimable privilege of drinking of the chalice to which there are undoubtedly attached special and extraordinary graces. Think, then, how great will be the beauty, the glory, the majesty of the good priest on the last day.

The priest on earth is the most noble member of Christ's mystic Body. He is the living temple of the Holy Ghost. It is with the eyes of the good priest that Jesus watches over his flock. It is with the lips of the good priest that Jesus prays for, instructs and encourages, the faithful. It is with the hand of the priest that Jesus blesses, baptizes, anoints and nourishes souls with the bread of life. It is with the feet of the priest that Jesus bears the Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth. "Whoever glorifies me, him shall I glorify," says the God of Justice. (I Kings ii, 30.) Imagine, then, if you can, the wondrous glory with which the good priest shall shine on the day of judgment.

On judgment-day all earthly dignities disappear; the sublime dignity of the priesthood alone shall remain. See those great kings, nobles, and generals. Here on earth

they are honored. Men bow before them in reverence. Their name is borne by the trumpet of fame to the uttermost ends of the earth. Even in death, their obsequies are celebrated with pomp. Gorgeous monuments are erected to their memory. Ah, look at them on judgment-day. Where are now their worshipful retinue? Where are now their crown and their purple?

"*Præterit figura hujus mundi.*" (I. Cor. vii, 31.) How many of those grandees crouch now beneath the beggar and the slave? Look, on the other hand, at the good priest. During life he was simply, perhaps poorly clad. How often was he hooted at and insulted because of the priestly garb that he wore! Ah! see him now in royal robes. On his brow glitters a kingly crown. "*Sacerdos in æternum.*" "*Levate capita vestra.*" O day of joy! Lift up thy head, O priest of the living God! The day of thy triumph has come. Lift that royal brow consecrated by the bishop's hands. Never more shall that brow be stained by the dust of the grave. Henceforth that brow shall gleam with the glory of the divinity.

The living light of the soul gleams through the consecrated body of the priest as the sunlight fills a fair crystal vase. O glorious body, fairer than the morning star! O glorious body, so often nourished by the Flesh and Blood of God! O glorious body, so often worn with sleepless nights and toilsome days. O blessed body, so often weakened by penance and fasting! O blessed body, that remained pure and unsullied in the midst of a shameless and adulterous generation! O blessed lips that have so often chanted the praises of God, chant now your never-ending hymn of praise and gratitude!

"Behold the fig tree," says our Lord; "when its fruits

appear you know that the summer is nigh." (Luke xxi, 29.) See the fig-tree in winter. It is brown and bare. It has no leaves, no fruit. It is apparently dead. But no! the tree is not dead. It lives and the proofs of its life shall appear in due time. Its rich purple fruit shall gleam in the summer sun.

Ah, how often is this life for the good priest naught but a long, dreary winter. He lives, indeed, and labors and suffers; but the noisy, boastful world knows little or naught of his labors. The proud, conceited world looks upon the good priest as a barren fruit-tree. But on judgment-day the whole world shall see the blessed fruit of his labors and sufferings. The whole world shall see how many sins have been prevented, how much good has been done, how many sinners have been converted, how many souls have been saved, how many souls have been led to a life of perfection, by the prayers, the alms, the devout Masses, the advice, the sermons, and especially by the good example of the priest.

The good priest himself will be astonished beyond measure to see all the good that has been done, all the souls that have been saved by his efforts. "*Videbit et affluet et mirabitur et dilatabitur cor ejus.*" (Isai. lx, 5.)

How often the good priest was laughed at and despised, not only by infidels, but even by certain unworthy priests to whom his pure, virtuous life was a continual reproach. They looked upon him as a scrupulous, narrow-minded simpleton. "*Diridetur justi simplicitas.*" (Job xii, 4.) But, on judgment-day, how different is their language! "*Nos insensati! Vitam illorum æstimabamus insaniam. Et ecce quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei.*" (Wisd. v, 4.) What a consolation for the good priest on judgment-

day when he sees around him the many souls that have been saved and sanctified by his labors, his prayers and his sufferings ! “ See, Lord,” he will say, “ thou hast given me five talents. Behold the fruit they have borne.” Ah ! blessed is that shepherd who, on the last day, can say to Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of souls : “ See, Lord, here are the sheep which thou hast confided to my care. I have not lost a single one. Non peridi ex eis quemquam.” (John xvii, 6.) Ah ! how these souls will bless the good priest with hearts overflowing with gratitude.

“ O good Jesus,” one will say, “ I was brought up in heresy, in ignorance of the true faith, and this holy priest, by his instructions, by his kindness, by his virtuous life, brought me from darkness to light.”

“ I was a great sinner,” another will say. “ I almost despaired of pardon, and this good priest encouraged me ; he broke the chains that bound me : he raised me from death to life.”

“ And I,” cries another, “ was a child, weak and ignorant. This saintly priest taught me my catechism ; he taught me the way to heaven ; he heard my first confession ; he gave me my first communion ; he watched over my innocence like a good angel. O Jesus, reward him with eternal blessings.”

“ And I,” cries another, “ was a poor orphan. I was straying on the brink of the precipice and this good priest saved me from ruin. His kind voice called me back ; his kind hand guided my faltering steps. O good Jesus, bless him eternally.”

“ O good Jesus,” another will cry, “ I was in danger of straying away ; of being entangled by the false pleasures of the world ; and this good priest watched over me

untiringly ; he guided my footsteps, till at last I found my vocation. It was he who encouraged me to leave the world, to leave all and consecrate my heart to thee, my heavenly Bridegroom. O good Jesus, reward him with eternal happiness."

What a joy it is for our dear Lord to reward the good priest, his faithful servant. Euge serve bone ! Well done, good and faithful servant ! Thou hast been faithful in little things. I will place thee over many things. Enter now into the joy of thy Lord. (Matt. xxv, 23.)

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INSTRUCTIONS AND ADMONITIONS, WRITTEN, AT THE COMMAND OF OUR LORD, BY ST. JOHN THE EVAN- GELIST TO THE BISHOPS OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA.

The blessed Father Hofbauer, C.SS.R., used to say that if a priest complied with one-fourth of his duties, the people will look upon him as a saint. Our Lord Jesus Christ, however, would not be satisfied with such a priest. He is displeased even with a priest who, though he may fulfil his duties, yet does not fulfil them with true fervor of charity. It is for this reason that our Lord commanded St. John to write to the angel (bishop) of the Church of Ephesus the following:

“I know thy works and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil, and thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. And thou hast patience, and hast endured for my name and hast not fainted.

“But I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first (fervor of) charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou hast fallen, and do penance, and do the first works. Or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance.” (Apoc. ii, 1-6.) This was written to a holy bishop. (Cornelius à Lapide proves that this bishop was St. Timothy.) From the praises which our Lord bestows upon him, it is clear that he was faithful in the fulfilment

of his duties, and yet our Lord showed himself greatly displeased with him for having grown remiss in his first fervor of charity.

What a lesson this for us priests ! Which of us can say in truth that he has been as faithful in the fulfilment of his duties as St. Timothy was ? If our Lord should send St. John to tell us what is wanting in us, which of us could expect to receive the praise which St. Timothy received before he was blamed for his remissness in fervent charity ? And would St. John have to blame us for nothing else than for having become less fervent in charity ? And even if he could not reprimand us for anything else, the severity of the reprimand for this fault is fearful. "Be mindful from whence thou hast fallen, and do penance and do the first works. Or else I come to thee and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance."

Our eternal Priest and Pastor reprimands priests and bishops so severely for certain faults, because on pastors especially depends the salvation of the people. "If there is a good pastor in a parish," says St. Alphonsus, "it is easy to see how religion there flourishes. The people receive the sacraments frequently ; they are given to prayer and meditation, and set a good example. But if the pastor of a parish is bad, the whole parish will abound in vices and scandals." (De oblig. paroch. No. 33.)

And when speaking of the duties of bishops, St. Alphonsus says : "Dixi, loquendo de parochis, a bonis parochis pendere subditorum salutem. Nunc dico a bonis Episcopis pendere salutem totius diœcesis ; nam Episcopus promovet bonos clericos, bonos sacerdotes, eligit bonos confessarios, et bonos parochos : suo bono

exemplo, et vigilantia mutum confert, ut in probitate sua illi perseverent, et ita universe in diœcesi pietas vigere videtur. Propterea in hac materia de pastorum debito fusius egi, quam in aliis, quia in hac agitur de bono, vel damno communi, quod omne in pastorum bono, vel malo ductu positum est."

"Si stomachus sanus est," says St. Chrysostom, "totum corpus validum est: ita si sacerdotium integrum fuerit, tota ecclesia floret; si autem corruptum fuerit, tota ecclesia marcida est. Cum ergo videris populum indisciplinatum et irreligiosum, sine dubio cognosce, quia sacerdotium ejus non est sanum." (Homil. 38. in Matt.)

It is then a question of the greatest importance for every priest to ask himself very often: what is there in me for which I may be displeasing to my divine Master? "If we judge ourselves," says St. Paul, "we should not be judged. (I. Cor. xi, 31.) It cannot be very difficult for a priest, even the most fervent, to discover, in his manner of thinking, judging, speaking and acting, something that displeases our Lord.

In a dark room we see nothing; but if we open the shutters a little; if one ray of light comes in, we see everything in the room; we see that the very air is full of motes.

Our souls are often like a dark room. At the hour of death we shall be wonderfully enlightened. We shall see our faults as God sees them. "Scrutabor Jerusalem in lucernas." (Soph. I. 12.) I shall search Jerusalem, that is, the soul of the priest. I shall search it with lamps. Let us often beg of God to give us some of the light that we shall have at the hour of death. Our faults, now that we are strong and healthy, are like a log in the

water, solight that a child can move it. At the hour of death, on the shore of eternity, our faults will be like a log on dry land, which several strong men can hardly move!

St. Carpus was a holy bishop of Thyatira. Our Lord bestowed great praise upon him when he made St. John write to him: "I know thy works and thy faith, and thy charity, and thy ministry and thy patience and thy last works, which are more than the former." To this praise, however, of the virtues of St. Carpus, our Lord added a reprimand, telling St. John to write to him: "But I have against thee a few things, because thou sufferest the woman Jezabel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants, to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols." (Apoc. ii, 18.) It was probably from human respect, or some other unworthy motive, that St. Carpus did not raise his voice against the woman Jezabel.

In like manner there are nowadays many pastors who from human respect, or other unworthy motives, fail to raise their voice against certain abuses and common errors of the time. "O but," they say, "the time has not come yet to speak against such abuses; we must wait for more favorable circumstances, otherwise we only excite contradiction and may do more harm than good."

Indeed, if the time has not come yet, when will it come? How long are we to wait? When our Saviour sent his apostles to convert the world, could not they, too, have answered: Lord, the time has not come yet. The people are not prepared yet. The world is too wicked. We are afraid we will meet with contradiction. And when the scourges fell like hail upon their bleeding shoulders, had they not every reason to say: Let us

give up trying to convert the world. Let us go back to our quiet, easy life. This kind of life is disagreeable ; we meet only with contradiction everywhere.

Instead of using such language, they rejoiced in having been deemed worthy to suffer for the sake of their divine Master. And when they were forbidden to teach any more in the name of Jesus Christ, Peter and John answered : " Is it just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God ? " (Acts iv, 19.)

St. Vincent de Paul declared that he would be tied hand and foot and thrown into fire rather than do or omit anything through human respect. Ah ! would to God every priest could say the same of himself. Of such a priest the Lord says : " The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips. He walked with me in peace and in equity and turned many away from iniquity." (Malam. ii, 6.)

But this is a praise which the Lord cannot bestow upon every pastor. On the contrary, there are pastors to whom our Lord can say what he made St. John write to the bishop of Pergamus, namely :

" I know where thou dwellest, where the seat of Satan is ; and thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith But I have against thee a few things : because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Isreal, to eat and to commit fornication : so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites. In like manner do penance, or else I will come to thee quickly, and fight against them with the sword of my mouth." (Apoc. ii, 12-16.)

This bishop, though quite orthodox himself, did not

use energetically enough the sword of the Word of God, with which he was armed, to oppose the false doctrines and erroneous principles of his time and country, and warn the Christians against following them. Hence it happened that those false doctrines spread more rapidly and infected even many of the Christians. For this neglect, and the evil consequences thereof, the bishop is severely reprimanded by our Lord, who threatens him and his flock even with everlasting punishment if they do not repent. Alas ! how many pastors are there who are guilty of similar neglect !

Dark clouds of error and weakness in faith have settled thickly around us since the time of the Reformation. It is the special duties of priests to scatter these clouds by speaking on the great truths of our religion with a lively faith, in language glowing with love for those truths, in words that work miracles, that is, in words which create in the mind of the hearers so profound a conviction of the truths of our religion, and which at the same time enkindle in their hearts so great a love for them as are calculated to make them believe and live up to these truths with a holy joy and spiritual delight.

This is, indeed, what Jesus Christ expects from every priest, especially in our time, when faith in the great truths of our holy religion grows weaker every day, not only among the higher classes of society, but even among the common people, especially among young men and young women. Now, the divine Master is sadly disappointed in all those priests who speak so coldly of him and his doctrine as to make believe that their own faith is rather weak.

Such coldness is generally found in those who, consid-

ering themselves learned and wise, rely too much on their own opinion and judgment in religious matters. They guide themselves only by their lights and for want of humility, care not to rise higher than human reason. Thus they are groveling all their life-time in the littleness of their own ideas and sentiments—a littleness incredible in all that regards the great mysteries and truths of the faith and the spiritual direction of souls.

Such men are in the habit of always thinking first how a tenet or practice or a fact is most presentable to the public. This habit soon and almost imperceptibly leads them to profaneness, and easily produces the spirit of rationalism in matters of faith.

Their too delicate and fastidious taste has too much regard for the feelings of a certain class of people. I am aware that Christian charity demands of us to have due regard for the feelings of others; and I am thoroughly convinced that no one was ever yet benefited by harsh means or abusive language. Charity, however, is not only not incompatible with truth, but it ever demands that the whole truth should be told, especially when its concealment is a cause of error or of perseverance in error and sin, in matters, too, of the greatest importance. Hence, to judge from the works of our greatest Catholic theologians, it appears that the deeper theologian a man is, the less does he give way to this studious desire of making difficulties easy at any cost short of denying what is positively *de fide*. They handle the truth religiously just in the way that God is pleased to give it to us, rather than to see what they can make of it themselves by shaping it for controversy, and so by dint of skilful

manipulation squeeze it through a difficulty. No doubt such pastors are out of harmony with the spirit of the Church and the saints. They do much harm to themselves and to other priests. By their example and principles they lead into error such priests as easily suffer themselves to be guided by them, forgetting the advice of St. John the Apostle: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God." (I. John iv, 1.) "I will teach you," says such a priest to a young priest, "how to become a good pastor and practical priest. I have acquired great experience in the ministry. Practice is as different from theory as light from darkness. I, too, have studied theology and I comply with my duties. But I do not profess singularity. I am no hypocrite, I live in great harmony with all the priests of my neighborhood. They are all very sociable and jovial. You, too, must join our society; otherwise none of them will care for you. You will be left alone, and all will look upon you as a spy.

"It is true, we must hear confessions when we are called. But why waste so much time in questioning and instructing penitents? Why hear general confessions? People remain always the same. In regard to divine service, visiting the sick, and the school, we must, of course, do as much as is prescribed. But why be over zealous and introduce more practices of piety and new burdens? The more we do for the people the more they wish us to do for them. No doubt we need also some time to enjoy life like other people."

Such sentiments, and even far worse ones, are frequently uttered by certain priests, in order to induce gradually good and fervent brethren of the clergy to

think, judge and act like themselves. “*Ne soli in dedecore versentur,*” says St. Bernard.

There are other priests who are destitute of the true spirit of the priesthood, though their conversation and conduct seem to be quite blameless. They are indolent and very fond of comforts; they are lukewarm in prayer, and hate to study and to work; they are given up to distractions and pastimes, and perform their duties in a mechanical manner; in a word, they are more worldly-minded than spiritual. Of course, they are priests, and many of them are loved and respected by their congregations, and their superiors find no fault with them. Hence younger priests are apt to think and to say: Why should we not be like them? Why should our conduct be more severe than theirs? Why should we try to appear better than so many others?

Here is a rock for the shipwreck of the virtue of so many priests. As the majority of priests lead a life more or less lukewarm, many a good priest begins to think that it is pride to aim at something better and more perfect. Alas! how can it be pride not to imitate what is condemned by our conscience, by the Gospel, and by the life of our divine Master and his saints? Where is it said that we should run with the majority? On the contrary, our Lord has told us to follow the minority, not the majority. “Enter you in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it. Beware of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you shall

know them. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.” (Mat. vii.)

“Behold,” exclaims St. Gregory, “the world is full of priests; but in the vineyard of the Lord we see but few laborers. We are adorned with the dignity of the priesthood, but we do not comply faithfully with its duties.” (Hom. 17, super Evang.) “Let us not ask,” says St. Chrysostom, “whether a thing is customary, but let us ask whether it is good and profitable; if a thing is good let us do it, though it is not practised by the majority of men; but if a thing leads to destruction, let us avoid it, though in use with the greater number of men.” (Hom. 56, super Genes.)

Let us not care for being considered singular in our manner of life. The life of the apostles and the saints, too, was considered singular by the world, for it differed very much from that of their fellow-men. Let our life be like theirs; let us imitate the saints to make sure of our salvation. “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire.” (Mat. vii. 19.) It is very difficult for a priest to be saved unless he dies a saint. Here it is that St. Chrysostom says: “Non arbitror, inter sacerdotes multos esse qui salvi fiant, sed multi plures, qui pereant.” (De Sacerd.)

Ah! let us rest assured that we are in great danger of being lost forever, unless we broaden, heighten, and deepen in ourselves sound, reasonable, yet childlike faith and live up to it. If we do not, the words which our Lord made St. John write to the bishop of Sardis will apply to us, namely: “I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive; and thou art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready

to die. For I find not thy works full before my God. Have in mind, therefore, in what manner thou hast received and heard ; and observe and do penance. If then thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee." (Apoc. iii, 1-3.)

Which of us priests has good reason to say in truth : Those words of our Lord are not meant for me ?

Well, let us suppose they are not meant for you ; can you say in truth that the words which our Lord made St. John write to the bishop of Laodicea, are not applicable to you, namely : " I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold, or hot ; but, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest : I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayst be made rich, and mayst be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear ; and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see. Such as I love I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous, therefore, and do penance. Behold, I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." (Apoc. iii, 14-20.)

What priest can say that he is not more or less lukewarm in the fulfilment of one or the other duty of his private or public life ? If we are not so lukewarm as the bishop of Laodicea, can we say in truth that we have not even entered upon the road to lukewarmness ? Let us

examine and judge ourselves honestly, especially in regard to certain principles favoring rationalism, or liberalism, or laxism, or infidel education, lukewarmness, or anything that is out of harmony with the spirit of the Church.

Fifty years hence, at the farthest, we shall all have crossed the threshold of eternity, and our fate shall be decided for weal or woe, for all eternity. *Mille anni ante oculos tuos tanquam dies hesterna, quæ præterit.* (Ps. lxxxix, 2.)

Since we live even now in eternity, let our conversation, our manner of life, be worthy of eternity; so that it may deserve some of the praise which our Lord bestowed upon the bishops of Smyrna and Philadelphia in Asia when he said to St. John: "And to the angel of the Church of Smyrna (St. Polycarp) write: I know thy tribulations and poverty, but thou art rich; and thou art blasphemed by them that say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil will cast some of you into prison that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Apoc. ii, 8-10). "And to the angel of the Church of Philadelphia write: I know thy works. Behold, I have given before thee a door opened which no man can shut: because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and adore before thy feet. And they shall know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee

from the hour of temptation which shall come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Apoc. iii, 7-12.)



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